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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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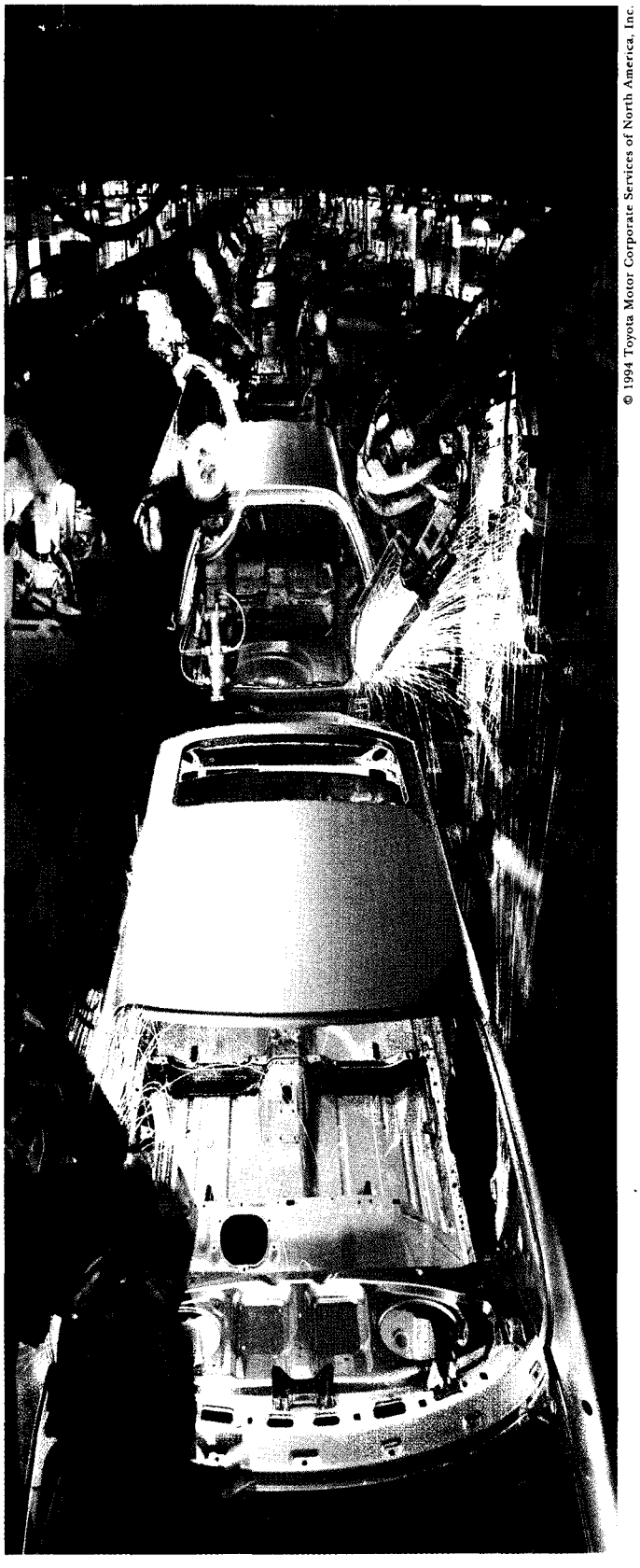

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CORRESPONDENCE

Not well-sculpted

To the editors:

In the perennial Washington search for "winners" and "losers" in the Cabinet, THE NEW REPUBLIC proffers an interesting formulation: the senior Cabinet secretary whose prescient advice is routinely sought, the Cabinet secretary who has shepherded the most dramatic reforms in American education in more than a decade through Congress and the Cabinet secretary charged with rebuilding the nation's crumbling infrastructure are all losers ("Cabinet Losers" by Fred Barnes, February 28).

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen has consistently provided the White House and the National Economic Council with sound advice. To note that his advice has not always been heeded ignores that his advice is always sought. Moreover, to suggest that Robert Rubin has "usurped" economic policy-making implies that economic policy-making resided somewhere in the previous decade. The lack of coordinated economic policy formulation in previous administrations led to the creation of a strong economic team, in which Secretary Bentsen plays a pivotal role. The dramatic and continued improvements in the economy reflect the sound advice given and policy-making conducted by the entire Clinton economic team.

The president has entrusted Education Secretary Richard Riley with responsibility for carrying out the educational reforms they began as governors. The president and Secretary Riley have worked closely on crafting the centerpiece of the administration's educational reform legislation, GOALS 2000. The American education agenda in the Clinton administration, led by Secretary Riley, will produce a generation of winners.

Transportation Secretary Federico Peña has been entrusted with rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, an area that President Clinton has been focused on since the campaign. It is under Peña's watch that the administration is fully funding the core highway program under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and is fully funding formula grants for mass transit capital. Finally, it is Secretary Peña that the president has turned to for the leadership required to lead the crucial rebuilding efforts in the wake of the Los Angeles earthquake.

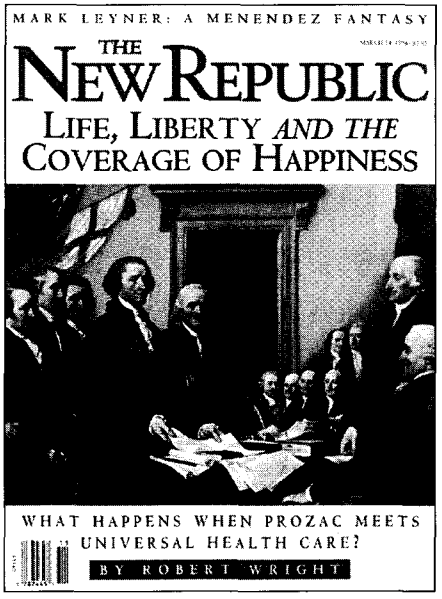
Barnes's article misses the essential difference between President Clinton's Cabinet and previous Cabinets: this administration cares more about coordinated policy development than well-sculpted monthly photo-ops.

CHRISTINE A. VARNEY
Secretary to the Cabinet
Washington, D.C.

Happy talk

To the editors:

Even if we agree with Robert Wright ("The Coverage of Happiness," March 14) that drug therapy and talk therapy ultimately work the same way—i.e., each improves self-esteem by raising serotonin levels, leading to a positive feedback loop in which more confident behavior brings on objective rewards that further boost confidence—a question remains: Does it matter whether one understands why one lacked confidence in the first place? (Or why one was depressed, abused a spouse, underachieved, etc.?)



Surely we accept the basic Freudian insight that childhood trauma can lead to adult neuroses (a.k.a., "dysfunction"). We accept the additional insight that successfully uncovering the root cause of pathological behavior does not necessarily remove the consequences—that destructive neurotic patterns can (and often do) persist in spite of understanding. If Prozac simply overpowers these undiscovered or otherwise unyielding dysfunctions chemically, where does that leave us? With a sense of false confidence. The root problems, capable of regeneration, remain firmly in place, whether we describe them as deep memory or neurochemical configurations. It's like taking cortisone to get through the football season: stop taking it, and the pain and disability will return.

If, in other words, I am an unhappy, unproductive asshole to begin with, Prozac—absent any insight into the origin of my problem—may make me happy and productive, but it will likely leave me, alas, an asshole.

MARLOWE HOOD
New York, New York

To the editors:

If history is any guide, Prozac is nothing new. It will replay a familiar story, common to many other psychoactive drugs. The miracle is announced; the news spreads; the stuff is distributed freely; endorsements are heard around the world. Soon a few negative side effects are noted; some people become addicted; warnings are issued. Then comes unauthorized use, perhaps followed by criminalization, illegal trafficking, detoxification therapies, and "nonaddictive" substitutes.

With variations, this is the story of heroin, cocaine, Librium, Valium, Quaaludes. There is no reason to believe Prozac will be any different. I am sure the shaman who invented wine called it a miracle substance and a radical transformation of the human condition. Up to a point, he was right.

KEN ATKATZ
Fresh Meadows, New York

To the editors:

Robert Wright weirdly suggests that because we don't understand the social impact of Prozac, we should generally slow down biomedical research by, say, imposing price controls on drugs or reducing the duration of patent protection. Prozac, however, is hardly representative of new pharmaceutical technology. In fact, of the 1,215 medicines and vaccines presently in human clinical trials or under review by the FDA, only twelve are categorized as anti-depressants. This contrasts with ninety-one experimental drugs for AIDS, fifty monoclonal antibodies, thirty-six drugs for arthritis, thirty-five for breast cancer, twenty-one for hypertension and twenty for osteoporosis.

Pharmaceutical research, by and large, does not aim to make people "better than well," but better than sick. And reducing research hinders the development of new tools to treat our leading diseases and causes of death. Less research means less hope of curing multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, Alzheimer's and hundreds of other disorders. After Prozac, where does Wright suggest we start cutting back?

DAVID GOLLAHER, PH.D.
Director, California Health Care Institute
La Jolla, California

To the editors:

After two cover stories in a one-month period (February 14 and March 14), I

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feel compelled to point out to you guys that Prozac is believed to be effective in relieving the symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

RONALD NETSKY
East Rochester, New York

Responsible

To the editors:

In response to your editorial "After Penance" (March 21), let me make it clear that I deplore the massacre of Palestinians in a mosque by an ultra-right-wing Israeli and I do not feel that I have the right to tell Israelis how to run their government. Nor do I believe that Americans have the right to emigrate to Israel for the purpose of changing its government.

Be that as it may, the leaders of the Palestinians are, unfortunately, not in a position to deplore this terrorist act, or any act of terrorism, except that of their own people. In fact, they are more responsible for this terrible act than anyone else. For decades they have been advocating terrorism, specifically terrorism against all Jews. For decades they have funded terrorism and refused either to renounce it or to deplore it. In fact, they have gloated at terrorist acts. Even now, when they find their own people targeted, they do not admit that their attitude toward terrorism in the past was in any way wrong and that it was, in fact, the root cause of this terrorist attack against themselves. However much the rest of us may inveigh against such behavior, terrorism against Palestinians by right-wing Israelis obviously will not stop until the Israelis stop feeling that they, themselves, are threatened by terrorists.

NORMA R. FRANK
Merion, Pennsylvania

X appeal

To the editors:

In "Back from the Future," Michael Kinsley writes that Generation X should stop whining about being "cheated by history" (TRB, March 21). He states that the baby boomers have no moral obligation to leave a better world for the next generation. This may be so. However, they do have a moral obligation not to leave a worse world, which is what they are doing with the $4 trillion debt. It will be the so-called whiners of Generation X who will be paying off the debts of today when the boomers are all dead or on the dole.

Finally, Kinsley states that the post-boomers never had a war. We did. It's just that we supported American troops and helped them win our war (Desert Storm), whereas a number of the boomers spit on American troops and helped them lose their generation's war (Vietnam).

COLIN CHRISTENSEN
Akron, Ohio

Bad hair day

To the editors:

After reading John B. Judis's fascinating Diarist on how his car was stolen ("A Steal," March 14), I am looking forward to similar Diarists by other contributing editors with penetrating analyses of the great issues of the day. Maybe Roger Rosenblatt could do a piece on how annoying it is to wait for the cable people, or Michael Walzer can tell us how he felt the last time he got a bad haircut.

DAVID ROZENSON
Newton Centre, Massachusetts

'90s-something

To the editors:

In his amusing piece on the proliferation of the phrase "Welcome to the '90s" (March 7), Andy Aaron overlooked perhaps the most telling example: "Welcome to the Nexis '90s, the decade of self-referential journalism."

DOUGLAS STONE
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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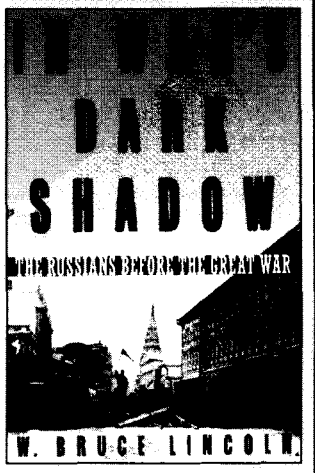

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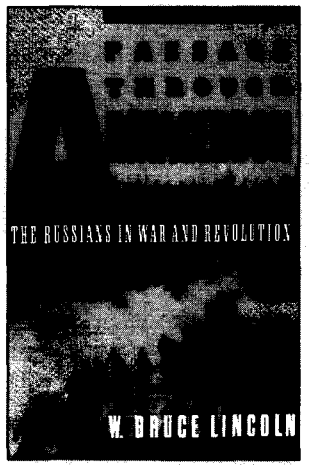

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FROM WASHINGTON

Screen test

In December the National Cancer Institute revised its guidelines on mammogram screening for breast cancer. Previously, the NCI had recommended mammograms every year or two for all women over the age of 40. Now it recommends annual mammograms for women over the age of 50. As for those between 40 and 50, the institute's position is that the evidence is not clear one way or the other. Women, it says, should study the data and decide for themselves.

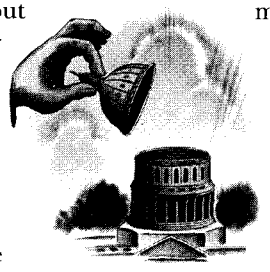
This is a deeply unsatisfying recommendation, for two reasons. First, if the full-time experts at the National Cancer Institute can't decide whether mammograms are worthwhile for women in their 40s, how on earth is a nonexpert with other demands on her time supposed to make a sensible decision for herself?

Second, this is not a question that society can leave completely up to individual women. In various circumstances, a decision must be made at the level of social policy. Health care reform is the most obvious example. If we are going to guarantee something called "health care" to everyone—one way or another—does that or does it not include mammograms for women in their 40s? But the question arises apart from health care reform. Even under current arrangements, insurance companies must decide whether this is a benefit they will pay for, and the government must decide whether to cover it in Medicaid, the military health system, etc.

So what's the answer?

It seems obvious, to start, that there is no magical dividing line at age 50. The experts are unanimous that regular mammograms starting at 50 cut the breast cancer death rate by one-third. But if mammograms are tremendously valuable at age 50, they can't be worthless at age 49. And if they are at least somewhat valuable at 49, they are only slightly less valuable at 48, and so on. Clearly it's a continuum: the exam gets more useful as you get older. Anywhere you draw the line is going to be arbitrary.

It seems implausible, therefore, that regular mammograms at ages under 50 can be completely without purpose. After all, mammograms of women in their 40s do catch cancer in about one out of 400 cases, and it has to be better to catch such cases earlier rather than later. One doctor quoted in *The New York Times* said that women should be warned of the "drawbacks" of mammograms in their 40s. To be sure. But the drawbacks seem pretty farfetched. The test itself is harmless. There is the psychological trauma of "false positives"—initial diagnoses of cancer that turn out to be wrong. And apparently scar tissue from the biopsy of lesions that prove benign can sometimes block the view of genuine cancerous lesions in later years. Still, if that was the entire downside, it would be hard to see the problem with making mammograms standard for women in their 40s.



Of course there's the cost. The NCI insists that economic considerations did not figure in its guideline change. But they inevitably figure in real life. If all 18 million American women in their 40s got an annual mammogram, at $150 a pop, that would cost $2.7 billion per year. The Cancer Institute maintains there is no good evidence that any lives would be saved as a result. But future studies may change that conclusion. As a very rough back-of-the-envelope calculation, take the one in every 400 that identify a cancer, and figure that (say) half of those might otherwise have gone undiagnosed until it was too late. It works out to more than $100,000 per life saved.

Worth it? You can argue that one either way. But the larger point doesn't go away in any event. What about women in their 30s? Their 20s? Their teens? What about prostate exams for younger and younger men? These exams will be ever more expensive per life saved, yet they are unlikely to prove completely worthless. But you've got to draw the line somewhere, and at the point where you draw that line you are putting a price tag on human life—even your own life in some cases.

Americans are notoriously bad at questions like this. We find it hard to make rational judgments about very small risks of very bad outcomes (like the risk of dying of breast cancer due to forgoing a mammogram in your 40s). Usually, political conservatives are the more hardheaded bunch. They enjoy ridiculing—often accurately—liberal hysteria on matters ranging from environmental hazards to auto safety to nuclear deterrence. On this question of mammograms, however, they have seen an opportunity to score points off of President Clinton by pandering to exactly the sort of anxieties they usually mock.

The standard benefits package under the Clinton health care reform plan offers mammograms beginning only at age 50. "As if by imperial edict," charges Bernadine Healy, the Clinton plan "has ruled out screening mammography for women in their 40s." She accuses Clinton of using the NCI revised guidelines "to justify a *cost-based* decision to limit women's health care choices." Healy was director of the National Institutes of Health until 1993. The National Cancer Institute is part of NIH. Thus the guideline revisions she objects to were formulated largely on her own watch. But now she is a Republican Senate candidate from Ohio, and so she has happily taken up this theme, shared by other "conservative" critics of the Clinton plan.

In truth, the Clinton plan "rules out" nothing. It defines a minimum benefits level, which any plan purporting to assure health care for everyone must do. Women in their 40s who could afford them would be perfectly free to have mammograms, and insurance companies would be perfectly free to offer mammogram coverage. (Free market conservatives, though, should realize that there is little point in "insuring" against a certain event—like an annual mammogram. The extra cost of the insurance will have to equal the cost of the mammogram itself—plus insurance company overhead.) And don't forget that Clinton's plan would make mammograms available for the first time to millions of women in their 50s, for whom the value is unquestionable.

But the telling phrase is "cost-based." Is it now the "conservative" position that any "cost-based" health care decision is immoral? That any consideration of the ratio of cost to benefit amounts to health care rationing? If so, "hold onto your wallet," as those guys used to like to say.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 11, 1994

HOW NORMAL A COUNTRY?

The new buzzword in the Clinton administration's Russia policy, unveiled last week by Secretary of Defense William Perry in Moscow, is "pragmatic partnership." That's downgraded—or toughened up?—from the erstwhile "strategic partnership." But the major theme remains "constructive engagement" with Moscow. Meanwhile, Republicans, twitching with cold war withdrawal symptoms, are girding themselves for renewed hostilities. Former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, gearing up for a presidential run in 1996, hints at a "very dangerous world," in which Russia could once again be a dangerous enemy. Senator Mitch McConnell, peeved by the Ames spy scandal, calls for an end to economic aid.

Oddly, the administration and its critics seem to agree on the same half-truth: that Russia's military still poses a threat to the United States. The former uses this as a rationale for appeasement; the latter, as a rationale for neo-containment. For his part, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev gives both sides ammunition by insisting that Russia be treated as a "superpower." (See "Andrei the Giant" by Stephen Sestanovich, page 24.)

Sorry, Andrei. Russia is no superpower. And both sides in the American debate are mistaken. Yes, Russia has continental size and a lot of nuclear weapons. But Zhirinovskyesque madness aside, there is no conceivable circumstance under which these would be used against us. Russia's ability to project conventional force against a Western opponent through its demoralized army and its rusting hardware is nonexistent. Its economy—one-tenth the size of ours—continues to shrink. Britain, France and Germany all have economies larger than Russia's. As MIT's Stephen M. Meyer pointed out in these pages last month, Moscow can barely feed and house its troops, let alone launch them against Hungary ("Mr. Doubtfire," March 14). The best way to think of Russia is as a regional power—albeit a regional power in many regions.

But a normal one? "Normal" is a word Russians use constantly about their own polity, but it is, alas, more an aspiration than a fact. Russia's domestic order still teeters from crisis to crisis; and its external presence is not exactly that of a medium-sized, self-confident power such as, say, France. Sure, it lays no claim to *global* hegemony. Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia, once prized by the Soviets, are ignored by the Russians. (Recent Russian dabbling in the Middle East peace process is a potential disruption that the administration should nip in the bud.) But Russia still suffers from a profound sense of deflation after its period of imperial hegemony. It's not willing to subsume its military power into economic interdependence or its self-interest, into internationalist rubrics. To Washington, market economics and democracy are ends in them-

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selves. To Russians, a new Russia means, well, something a bit like the old Russia. The desideratum is the reconstitution of Russia as hegemon in the former Soviet space, and as a player in areas of traditional Russian interest, such as the Balkans. Capitalism and freedom are useful insofar as they serve this goal. There is thus no necessary contradiction between President Boris Yeltsin, political and economic modernizer, and President Boris Yeltsin, architect of a reborn Russian sphere of influence. Or for that matter, between Andrei Kozyrev, internationalist cooperator, and Andrei Kozyrev, nationalist provocateur.

So how should we deal with them? There is no need, *pace* Zbigniew Brzezinski, to head back toward a deep freeze; nor is there much point, as Strobe Talbott has gradually realized, in attempting to treat Russia as a vanguard of internationalist values or a permanently appeasable force. The alternative to both courses is a bracing and simple one: do what the Russians are doing. We should define our interests clearly, and forthrightly pursue them. Ideology and romance are not certain guides to charting a Russia policy, but geopolitics can be. It provides the only template for a solvent American diplomacy toward Russia: that is, one that neither hitches policy to the vicissitudes of internal Russian political development, nor rushes into a new cold war.

A basic geopolitical asymmetry characterizes our relationship with the Russians: they are close to Central Asia, the Caucasus and Europe. We, by contrast, are far away. In all these areas, Russia has the advantage of proximity and the disadvantage of weakness; we have the opposite. There has thus emerged a kind of diplomatic minuet—over NATO, over Bosnia, over Ukraine—where both sides have been testing the other's interest and resolve; and in which each incident has the potential to involve, and destabilize, the entire Russo-American relationship. What we need is a clear way to distinguish our interests from theirs; to establish a relationship that is as direct as it is realistic. Without a clear strategic sense of what matters to us, we will be forced to pretend our vital interests are at stake where they are not—in Kazakhstan, for example—and inclined to appeasement where our interests clearly *are* at stake—in Eastern Europe.

To stabilize the relationship, we propose a simple solution: to put it crudely, a swap of Central Asia for Europe. In part, this is perfectly consistent with the current administration policy. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, America has only peripheral interests (a bit of oil, for example). In fact, some of our interests are even congruent with those of Russia. Neither they nor we would like to see Islamic fundamentalism spread northward from Iran or Afghanistan. To the extent that the Russian army helps prevent that, we can afford to give it a relatively free hand—as long as such operations have the blessing of the United Nations, and remain broadly governed by international law, as the administration and Moscow have agreed. "We will not go to war" for Kazakhstan, however, as Secretary Perry bluntly informed that country's government last week.

Europe is another story. Though the Clintonites have sometimes suggested that East Asia is more important to the United States than Europe is, the latter remains an area of vast political and economic value. Europe also has a nasty habit of being the place where world wars begin. Bosnia shows the danger of letting it drift into its old historical patterns of international fragmentation and rivalry. Yet that is precisely what might happen if the United States is perceived as withdrawing from its stabilizing role in the still barely united continent, or as ceding "joint" responsibility for security to the Russians under the nebulous "Partnership for Peace."

The administration greeted the Russians' recently stated intention to join the Partnership for Peace as a sign that U.S.-Russian cooperation is still going strong. But Russian spokesmen pointedly characterized their decision as an effort to "secure Russian national interests." This suggests that Russia is trying to reverse America's halfhearted efforts to move the West eastward. Does the Clinton administration really want to see the West's victory in the cold war give way to such an absurd result?

We can prevent this without either unduly inflaming the Russians or leaving a security vacuum between the Elbe and the Russian border. We have opposed immediate NATO membership for Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic on the grounds that their more pressing need is for trade with, and investment from, the West. That basic view remains valid, but the United States might, as Senator Richard Lugar has suggested, phase in alliance membership to the Eastern European states as NATO "associates," according to reasonably demanding political and military criteria, and on an appropriately deliberate timetable.

At the same time, we might, as Brzezinski has recently proposed, abandon our standing offer of eventual NATO membership for Russia. Russia's inclusion would muddy the political meaning and strategic coherence of the alliance. Do we seriously propose to commit Belgium and Denmark, let alone America, to defend Russia's southern and far eastern borders? Rather, we could offer Russia security guarantees in the form of a kind of nonaggression pact with NATO.

These ideas may or may not meet with the Russians' immediate approval; some of their fears of the West have their roots in a post-imperial syndrome that is beyond anyone's ability to assuage. But the Russians might just respond to reason backed by power, resolve and the assertion of plausible national objectives. The moment has come for America to candidly define its security interests in the former Soviet ambit. What a splendid change that would be from allowing our foreign policy considerations to be shaped by the shifting passions, insecurities and ambitions of Moscow's mercurial political class. •

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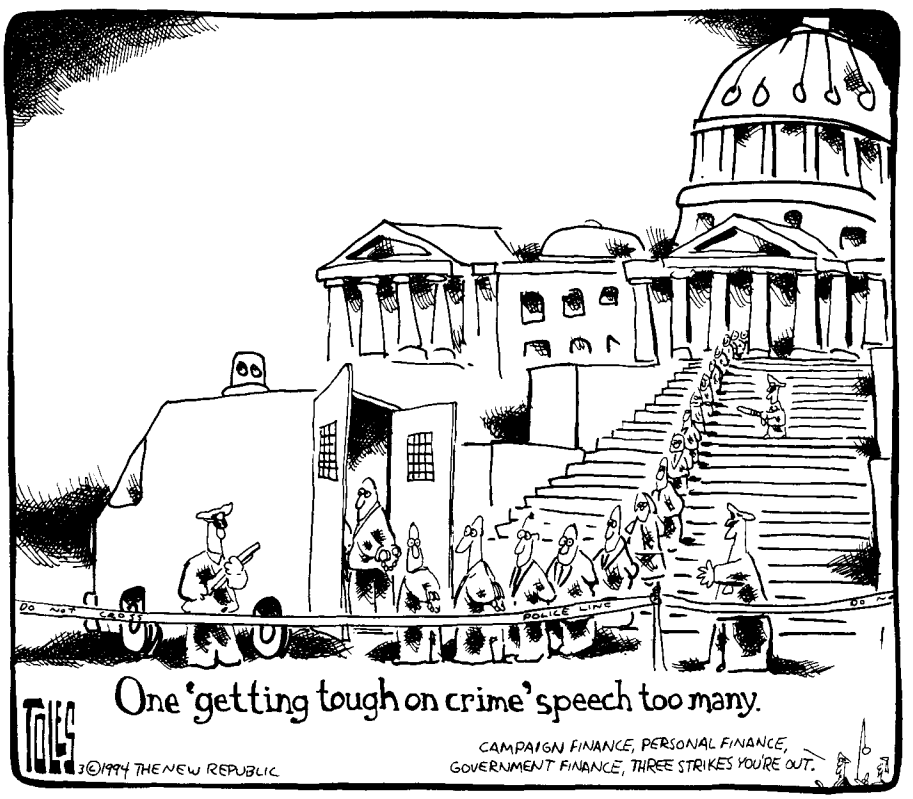
NOTEBOOK

THE CHINA SYNDROME: We understand there was a certain bumblingness to Secretary of State Warren Christopher's trip to China; but the important thing is that the secretary bumbled to the right place. The United States should be happy to be known by the mistreatment of Christopher by the world's most distinguished violators of human rights. The confrontation was morally clarifying and one of the Clinton administration's few fine hours in foreign policy. It was also, of course, unhelpful for American business. But it was our impression that the triumph of American profits over American values was one of the Democrats' principal objections to the foreign policy of George Bush. It is not surprising that Henry Kissinger and Lawrence Eagleburger are attacking the administration: they can live with repression that pays well. But it is surprising that some of the president's most prominent associates—Ron Brown, Robert Reich among them—are making the unqualified, unalloyed, utterly venal argument for money. The problem may be traced back to the president, naturally, who has become a full-time salesman for American products abroad, and who often mistakes trade policy for foreign policy. On China, this time, the president finds himself in the right place. We hope he can contain the salesman within.


One 'getting tough on crime' speech too many.
TOLES
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CAMPAIGN FINANCE, PERSONAL FINANCE, GOVERNMENT FINANCE, THREE STRIKES YOU'RE OUT.

BOOK NOTES: The scales just keep falling from our eyes. On the morning of March 20, the brunching citizens of the capital opened *The Washington Post* "Book World" to find an undistinguished, rambling review of some books about black anger and white rage by Tony Martin. "Book World" identified Tony Martin as a professor of Africana studies at Wellesley, and as the author and editor of some volumes on Marcus Garvey and black culture. Maybe that is all they knew about him. What they did not know was that they had invited into their pages one of the season's most accomplished haters. Martin is the author most recently of *The Jewish Onslaught*, a virulently anti-Semitic account of his troubles (and the more, the better) at Wellesley for teaching a "text" called *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, which blames the Jews for the African slave trade. (A blurb on the back of the *Post*'s reviewer's book reads: "The Jews have made a hell of a mistake this time.") It is unlikely that the editors of "Book World" are knaves. That leaves fools.

WHERE IS POLITICAL CORRECTNESS WHEN YOU NEED IT?: "You are articulate. You are handsome. You are young. You have the opportunity to provide a unique level of leadership."—Senator Dianne Feinstein, at the confirmation hearing of Deval Patrick to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division

(Thanks to Stephen Burbank, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.)

TWO JAKES: With this issue, Jacob Weisberg, formerly a senior editor, becomes a contributing editor, and will write the national affairs column for *New York* magazine.

GLOBAL CHILLING:

THE 5TH USEA GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM
originally scheduled for January 20, 1994
was postponed due to cold weather in Washington, DC

—from a recent U.S. Energy Association flier

(Thanks to Evan Wallace, Seattle, Washington.)

CROSSED WIRES:

Bell firms get boost from House panels

—*USA Today*, March 17

Move Said to Hurt Baby Bell Chances To Offer Long-Distance Phone Service

—*The Washington Post*, same day

(Thanks to Charlotte Bruce, McLean, Virginia.) •

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Music vs. assimilation in L.A.

TECHNOBANDA

By David E. Hayes-Bautista and Gregory Rodríguez

After more than six years of running with the West Los Angeles Sotel gang, 20-year-old Juan Mireles traded in his bandanna for a Stetson and a new pair of boots. Afraid of looking like a hapless immigrant, Mireles had only reluctantly allowed his younger sisters, Veronica and Jessica, to dress him up "like a straight-out Mexican" and take him dancing. That night, the ambience, the girls and the circusy sounds of *banda*—the biggest musical craze to hit Los Angeles in decades—changed forever his conception of cool.

Banda music—the fruit of Mexico's popular town orchestras appropriating the instruments of the Emperor Maximilian's military bands—has taken over L.A. A fixture of small-town Mexican life since the mid-nineteenth century, *banda* bands, with their tubas, trumpets and snare drums, still escort religious processions and perform free on Saturday afternoons in plazas throughout Mexico. It probably would have stayed that way had it not been for a radio station on Sunset Boulevard, just off the Hollywood freeway. On August 1, 1992, KLAX 97.9 was reformatted to showcase a new generation of *banda* music—*technobanda*—which added vocals and synthesizers and replaced the traditional guttural coughs of the tuba with the electric bass. Soon after the change, the Arbitron ratings showed *La Equis* (the "X"), as KLAX is popularly known, to be the most listened-to station in America's largest radio market.

The days of Anglo-American numerical dominance in greater Los Angeles, which lasted slightly more than a century, ended with the 1990 census. Latinos already outnumber Anglos and will have an absolute majority in Los Angeles County by the end of the decade. The overwhelming popularity of *banda* is a reflection of this dramatic shift. No longer a minority, Latinos are asserting their sounds and symbols on this evolving metropolis. "The *banda* craze has made everything Mexican more popular," says Malu Elizondo, an executive at Fonovisa, an L.A.-based record label that produces many of the bigger *banda* groups. "It's been the little spark that was needed for the big explosion."

"Buenos Dias, Los Angeles!" cries *La Equis* disc jockey Juan Carlos Hidalgo at 5:25 a.m. as he jumpstarts his drive-time radio show. Hidalgo and his quirky sidekick, known only as El Peladillo ("Little Rascal"), are hosts of the most popular morning radio program in Los Angeles and Orange counties. For more than a year, they have eclipsed even Howard Stern. Hidalgo, a native of the Mexican state of Michoacan, arrived in the United States illegally in 1984 and picked strawberries up the coast in Oxnard before enrolling in a local Spanish-language radio-announcing school in 1987. The lanky 28-year-old straight-man, who describes himself as perenially restless, says he came north to seek a better life and found one. Three months after he began classes he landed the dawn shift at KTRO in Oxnard. Several months later he met El Peladillo at a Halloween party. Hidalgo invited this peculiar character, who came to the party dressed as Cantinflas, the legendary Mexican picaresque film star, to be his co-host. The young man left his job picking lemons to become El Peladillo full-time. Within a year they were doing drive-time in L.A.

"The Juan Carlos and El Peladillo Show, the program Governor Pee Pee Wilson hates most," goes one of the duo's many ten-second promotions in Spanish. Much of the show's popularity stems from the fact that listeners think of Hidalgo and El Peladillo as their allies. "People identify very much with us, through the music and because of our positive attitude," says Hidalgo. "When there are problems in the community, like in the case of Governor Wilson attacking immigrants, we don't have, as we say, hair on our tongue keeping us from telling the truth." For three months one of the show's humorous riffs involved the governor sitting in the corner of the room wearing donkey ears. Wilson's staff took these antics seriously enough to send representatives to ask if Hidalgo and El Peladillo could please mention some of the good things the governor had done for Latinos. The hosts told them they didn't know what "good things" they were referring to.

Unlike most popular radio personalities, Hidalgo and El Peladillo perform for the entire family. "We make a lot of jokes," says Hidalgo. "We say a lot of disgraceful things, but we're never crude." Since the birth of rock 'n' roll, few radio stations, if any, have achieved as multigenerational an audience as KLAX. According to the Arbitron ratings, *La Equis* ranks first among adults 25 to 54 and second among teens. One of the disc jockeys' most important promotional functions is to sponsor *banda* clubs, which hundreds of thousands of teenagers and young adults have formed all over Los Angeles. To Hidalgo and El Peladillo, acting as *padrinos*, or godfathers, to more than 300 of these clubs is part of their larger commitment to entertain and contribute to a city whose vitality increasingly springs from the south.

Eighteen-year-old Lisa Gallegos's Mexican-born parents are thrilled and comforted that their U.S.-born daughter not only listens to Mexican music now but has joined a *banda* club. Jesus Gallegos says his oldest daughter has changed a lot since she has been dancing *la quebradita*, a playful and acrobatic two-person dance that has become synonymous with *banda*. "The hat, the boots—she never wore

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them before. I feel good, because it's fancy and it's safe." Lisa, a straight-A student at St. Bernard's Catholic high school in Playa del Rey, is one of the two elected secretaries of Ranchero Band, a 100-member club that was started about two years ago in Inglewood, a predominantly black and Latino suburb of Los Angeles. The founding president registered Ranchero Band with *La Equis*. Clubs sponsored by the radio station are entitled to have their dances announced over the airwaves. Some even receive visits from their *padrinos*. In exchange, the clubs support *La Equis* in community outreach efforts. In January, at the behest of the D.J.s, clubs from all over Los Angeles collected fifteen tons of food in the station's parking lot to give to the victims of January's earthquake. A few fortunate clubs are asked to come down to the station and record a cross between a promotion and a public service message: "Say no to drugs and gangs, and yes to *la quebradita* and *La Equis*!"

Dressed in jeans, a denim shirt and a white Stetson, Lisa Gallegos is among the club members guarding the entrance to the party that Ranchero Band is throwing in the carport of a drab, '60s-style apartment building in West L.A. She and several of the club's burlier male members are keeping track of who comes and goes. They routinely search guests for knives, bottles, drugs and guns. A tiny floodlamp attached to the side of the building and the D.J.'s feeble revolving lights barely illuminate the faces of the dancers and those huddled around them. Though it is a Sunday night, the small concrete space is awash in bobbing heads, torsos swaggering to electronic oom-pah-pahs, legs kicking swiftly forward and across, then spinning back and behind. Half the partygoers are dressed in *banda* style. The others are wearing a synthesis of urban and cowboy.

Standing off to the side, 19-year-old Peter Sanchez, a wiry young man with closely cropped hair, baggy jeans and a white T-shirt, echoes the sentiments of several boys who say that dancing *banda* has kept them out of trouble. "Instead of being outside doing something we're not supposed to, we can come and dance. All we want to do is have fun. That's the whole point." His head turns and his voice sweetens as a very proper-looking girl dressed for *quebradita* passes. "Hi, Lupe," he says. "How are you?"

Although the majority of *banda* fans are the children of immigrants, greater numbers of second- and even third-generation Mexican-Americans have started to embrace the trend. It is nearly impossible for a Mexican-American to live in L.A. and not feel defined either by the prevailing anti-immigrant climate or by the surge in the Spanish-speaking population. While in 1970 only one in five Latinos in Los Angeles County was an immigrant, today slightly more than half are foreign-born. Consequently, the assimilative process is in reverse thrust. Bolstered by momentum, numbers, proximity to the homeland and electronic media, the new Latinos are connecting their past, present and future in a way that previous generations of immigrants and their children could not have imagined.

Two years after his little sisters took him dancing, Juan Mireles is president of Ranchero Band. Now he feels that adhering to the ways of his parents affords him a bigger world than when he was "bumping rap music" and sticking close to home. "Since I've been dancing *quebradita*, I started meeting different people, different girls. It just hit me. There's something else I can do besides hanging out with the same people all the time. We don't think about neighborhoods anymore. We invite all clubs to our parties." Mireles likes to see himself as having both the bearing of the old world and the cunning of someone who knows how the game is played here. "You can say that I'm back to being a Mexican, but more streetwise. Don't get me wrong, man, I've been surfing, too."

DAVID E. HAYES-BAUTISTA is director of the Alta California Policy Research Center. GREGORY RODRÍGUEZ is a research associate at the center.

COURT WATCH

VILLAGE PEOPLE

By Jeffrey Rosen

Can the state of New York, by drawing political boundaries along religious lines, establish a municipal theocracy governed entirely by Satmar Hasidim? This is the constitutional question the Supreme Court is likely to avoid when it takes up the *Kiryas Joel* case on March 30. Instead, the justices will answer a related but less basic question: Can New York grant the Satmar village all the powers of a religiously segregated public school district and authorize it to educate handicapped Hasidic children at state expense?

The missed opportunity is unfortunate. The village and the school represent a literal fusion of church and state; they are analytically inseparable and should stand or fall together. In fact, the *Kiryas Joel* case seems to be the most meticulous example of religious gerrymandering the Court has ever confronted.

If the Satmars had set out, like the Puritans, on an errand into the wilderness, they would have been entitled to incorporate as a village and receive basic municipal services. But they chose not to establish their city on a hill. In 1974 they moved from Brooklyn to Monroe, New York, a town noted at the time for its religious diversity. (It had a Jesuit retreat, a Hare Krishna ashram and a Jehovah's Witness convention center.) Two years later, during the course of a dispute over zoning laws, the Satmars invoked an obscure New

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York law that allowed them to secede from Monroe by carving out a religiously segregated community, which they named Kiryas Joel ("the community of Joel") in honor of Grand Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum. When the surveyor's first draft accidentally left three or four non-Hasidim inside the village, he was sent back to the drawing board.

As soon as New York authorities approved the petition to incorporate in 1977, the Satmars closed the regular public school and sent their children to the village yeshivas. In an annex to the yeshivas, the state provided special education for disabled Satmar children. But the Supreme Court put an end to this sort of sensible arrangement with its 1985 *Aguilar* decision, which forbade public education for the disabled at parochial schools. In response to *Aguilar*, some Satmar parents sent their disabled children to the Monroe public school outside the village; but they complained that the children suffered "panic, fear and trauma" when forced to endure the taunts of non-Hasidim. The Monroe school district then refused to provide the most constitutionally appropriate solution: special education at a neutral site inside the village.

In 1989, still scrambling for a response to *Aguilar*, the New York legislature designated the village of Kiryas Joel itself as a separate public school district; and village authorities promptly created a special public school exclusively for handicapped Hasidim. Today, about 200 disabled Hasidic children, many of them bused in from the surrounding county, attend the Satmar public school. The organizing principle for the school, in short, is sectarian rather than geographic.

The Satmars' lawyer, Nathan Lewin, is staking his case on the claim that the village and the district are defined by geography rather than faith. "No one is excluded from the village on the grounds of race or religion," says Lewin. But rather dramatic evidence suggests the opposite. Kiryas Joel requires anyone who wants to build within its borders to pay a tithe of $10,000 to Congregation Yetev Lev. In a 1989 announcement in *Der Yid: Voice of American Orthodox Jewry*, the village set forth a restrictive housing policy: "It is forbidden for any contractor or owner of a house, in our village, to sell or rent an apartment in Kiryas Joel to a new resident without receiving permission in advance, in writing." Speaking later that year, Grand Rabbi Moses Teitelbaum, son of Joel, made the point more directly: "Anyone that rents without this [permission] has to be dealt with like a real murderer ... and he should be torn out from the roots." Two residents who rented apartments without rabbinic permission were later beaten and stoned.

Since April 1993 residents who have received permission to move to Kiryas Joel have also been required to sign a contract promising "to be guided by the laws and ways of the Grand Rabbi." The contract binds the residents "only to go to the synagogues under the control of our congregation"; and to send their children "only to the school Torah Veyreh, and Bais Rachel, that was founded and built by the Grand Rabbi (Joel) and is under the control of the present Rabbi (Moses)."

As for the public school board, the first and only election was held in January 1990. A month earlier the Grand Rabbi said: "It's like this. With the power of the Torah, I am here the Authority in the Rabbinical Leadership.... As you know I want to nominate seven people and I want these people to be the people." When Joseph Waldman, a dissenting Satmar, tried to run without the rabbi's permission, he was banished from the congregation; his six children were expelled from the yeshiva; his tires were slashed; his windows were broken; and several hundred people, including the rabbi, marched outside his house chanting, "Death to Joseph Waldman!"

"This rabbi is behaving the same way Khomeini used to behave in Iran," says Waldman, who has filed a brief against the village. "They gave out an order against me in the Jewish newspapers. They hung up placards in the synagogue saying this man has to be killed. My campaign manager was gored in front of his home by a congregation official." Two years ago, according to Michael Sussman, Waldman's lawyer, sixty families who had voted for Waldman were forbidden to visit the graves of their fathers. They were also banned from a local synagogue, which doubles as the municipal polling station, and their names were removed from a list of registered Democrats.

In their Supreme Court briefs, lawyers for both sides have chosen not to emphasize these unpleasant facts. Instead, they are attacking and defending the New York statute as it is written rather than as it has been applied. But even if the Court closes its eyes to the realities of life in Kiryas Joel, there is little doubt that the village was created to invest a religious community with political power, and that its borders are, in practice, impermeable. In this sense, it looks like an even purer establishment of religion than the Massachusetts Bay colony. "The Hasidim are like parodies of the popular image of the Puritans," says Sacvan Bercovitch of Harvard, who notes that the Puritans, unlike the Hasidim, took care to maintain the separation between civil and religious authority.

The best argument for supporting Kiryas Joel is that it is not an establishment of religion but an accommodation of a religious minority. The argument, however, is complicated by the Satmars' attempt to have it every which way: they deny that religious law prohibits their children from mixing with non-Hasidim, but they insist that a separate school district is necessary to accommodate their religious "lifestyle." In short, their effort to avoid the restrictions of the Constitution's Establishment clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion") makes it harder for them to invoke the protections of the Free Exercise clause ("or prohibiting the free exercise thereof").

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Mentoring Reconsidered

The biggest terror for many little children is getting lost. They'll go somewhere with their mother or father and when they look around mom or dad will be gone. In the classic happy ending, the parent appears and hugs the child, and they go home together. But for many of the kids in our society who are lost because they are not getting the support they need from adults, there won't be any happy ending.

This is especially likely for kids in homes where they suffer violence and abuse from the adults who are supposed to be caring for them. Or where a single parent is so distracted with worry and work that the children don't get the emotional and moral support they need to grow into strong and confident adults.

One answer often proposed is mentoring, one-on-one help from adult volunteers who take needy youngsters under their wings and attempt to turn their lives around. Mentoring appeals to people of many political stripes. Conservatives favor it because they see voluntarism as a way of solving social problems without involving government (and spending a lot of money). So do liberals who believe that communities can and must take responsibility for their own problems. But *The Kindness of Strangers: Adult Mentors, Urban Youth and the New Voluntarism* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), a recent book by Mark Freedman, raises serious questions about using an ad-hoc approach to deal with this enormous social and human problem.

Conservatives favor mentoring because they see it as a way of solving social problems without involving government.

For one thing, Freedman points out, there are never enough volunteers. Furthermore, most mentoring programs are run on a shoestring so they don't have the staff to make careful matches between mentors and youngsters. Nor can they provide mentors with the training and follow-up they need. Given these limitations, mentoring is as chancy as a blind date—and no more likely to lead to the lasting and solid relationship these kids need. Many kids pull the plug because a couple of outings a month with a stranger from another world are not enough to overcome their uneasiness and distrust. Many mentors find they can't really fit mentoring into their busy schedules. Others give up because it is so hard to get through to their kid. (This, of course, gives a youngster who has probably already been failed by adults another experience of how worthless he is.) At best, a commitment of four hours a month for a year or so, which is the average, will not turn around many lives.

Freedman's suggestion is that we look at existing institutions, like schools, where possibilities for mentoring arise naturally. Teachers and other school personnel don't have to be parachuted into students' lives; they know these kids and work with them every day. And the personal concern mentors feel for the youngsters they work with is a natural extension of the teacher-pupil relationship rather than the kindness of a stranger, which must often seem rather artificial.

The problem is that schools are not organized in a way that gives teachers and students a chance to develop close and caring relationships—and they don't have the resources to do it either. Elementary school children spend one year with a teacher—just long enough to *start* feeling comfortable—and then they move on to a new teacher. After elementary school, they often have a different teacher for every subject.

Why shouldn't elementary and junior high school students stay with the same group of kids for three or four years? Why shouldn't there be a team of teachers and paraprofessionals, and why shouldn't the class be broken down into small groups so each group can work closely with a teacher—and get to know one another? In high school, mentoring could be carried on by programming small weekly seminars, which would continue—same teacher and same kids—throughout the students' high school years. Or all these changes could be carried out in smaller schools or schools-within-schools, where students and teachers start out with a better chance of knowing one another.

These ideas are sound in educational as well as emotional and moral terms. Students who are connected with another adult, and with one another, are less likely to drop out. And they are more likely to work and shape one another up—and thus to enjoy a measure of success in schoolwork.

Mentoring can fill an important need for the many youngsters who have no close or caring relationship with an adult. But we are kidding ourselves if we think we can make a dent in this enormous problem with ad-hoc arrangements. We should stop working around the edges of the main institution concerned with children—the schools—and concentrate on making our schools moral communities. It can be done.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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The Satmars compare themselves to the Amish, and cite the 1972 *Yoder* case, which excused the Amish from sending their children to public schools. But there are two crucial differences. The Supreme Court in *Yoder* emphasized that "social values" (as opposed to religious scruples) are not enough to justify a religious exemption. And unlike the Amish, who don't believe in voting or holding office, the Satmars are not asking to withdraw their children from the secular world. Instead, they want to administer a state program for Satmar children on their own authority and their own terms.

The justices are likely to rule against the Satmars; but it is not clear which legal theory will command a majority. As Ira Lupu argues in the January issue of the *George Washington Law Review*, the various opinions by the New York State Court of Appeals reflect the conflicting strands of separationism that have muddled the Supreme Court's religion jurisprudence in the past two decades. Some of the New York judges saw Kiryas Joel as a discriminatory sect preference; others as a symbolic union of church and state; still others as a state endorsement of religion.

None of these theories is very convincing. It is implausible to argue, as the lower court did, that non-Satmars will perceive the village as a symbolic disapproval of their own religious choices. In a case as tangible as this, it seems foolish to speculate about perceptions rather than reality. It would be even more unfortunate if the justices endorsed the reasoning of Chief Judge Judith Kaye, who said that all religious accommodations are a kind of religious establishment, and therefore should be subject to the strictest scrutiny. In practice, this could mean the end of legitimate accommodations for religious minorities who, unlike the Satmars, seek exemptions from generally applicable laws.

The most convincing way of ruling against the Satmars is also the narrowest; and it would require the justices to tease out the ill-defined metaphor of religious gerrymandering. In the 1970 *Waltz* case, Justice John Harlan warned about the dangers of "political fragmentation on sectarian lines," and he suggested that government cannot, by ingenious draftsmanship, carve out homogeneous enclaves for particular religious sects. Kiryas Joel, far more dramatically than *Shaw* v. *Reno*, the landmark voting rights case last June, involves the use of political boundaries to enforce ethnic balkanization and cultural apartheid.

Religious minorities who fear the rigors of pluralism should be perfectly free to resist assimilation. But if they can fence themselves into separate governments and separate school districts, then racial and ethnic minorities will be entitled, by equal treatment principles, to segregated cities and schools of their own. "The Constitution is not violated if God smiles on Caesar's handiwork," says Nathan Lewin. But the Constitution is surely violated when Caesar smiles on God's handiwork, which is what New York state is attempting to do. •

ON THE HILL

DISREGARDING HENRY

By Weston Kosova

Henry Gonzalez was pouring it on thick. "The good people who have been smeared have the right to clear their names," he wrote of the Clintons in a surprise letter to House Speaker Tom Foley last Monday afternoon, "and the country deserves a chance to expose the Republican witch-hunt for what it is." After months of stonewalling, the chairman of the House Banking Committee was suddenly endorsing an extensive congressional investigation of the Whitewater mess. As he told *The Washington Post*: "It is, I believe, time for Democrats to use the truth, the weapon that Republicans fear most."

It was a classic Gonzalez performance. Only a day before he had seemed a rock-solid opponent of hearings. Now, for reasons that sounded like loyalty, he was unleashing Clinton's worst nightmare. A troubled Democratic president looked to the Democratic chairman of the committee that controls his fate and met the manic eyes of Henry Gonzalez, a judge and jury unto himself. If the Banking panel were controlled by virtually anyone else—John Dingell, Pat Moynihan, even—Clinton might hope for a manageable situation, some room to negotiate, a favor to call in. From Gonzalez he can expect nothing but unpredictability. The chairman owes Clinton nothing. And he has no need for his debt. Gonzalez is a loner. He hears no counsel but his own, has virtually no close allies in the House (Gonzalez didn't tell anyone, not even the ranking Democrats on his own committee, of his decision to come out for Whitewater hearings). The last of a generation of patronage congressmen, he is motivated much less by party than by what he perceives to be others' unforgivable acts of betrayal—against country, or, worse, against him.

Gonzalez's list of grievances is long. At one time or another he has called for the resignations of presidents Nixon, Bush and Reagan. But he also dragged the Democratic members of the Keating Five before his committee and treated them with scorn. Nor did Clark Clifford, the old Democratic hand and BCCI suspect, escape Gonzalez's interrogation.

Gonzalez is the kind of man who sees potential betrayers all around him. "Brilliant, arrogant and a tinge jealous," is how one longtime observer of Texas politics describes him. He is "very mindful of who does and does not accord him the respect he expects." One aide to a Texas Republican puts it this way: "Gonzalez defines a line and then waits for you to cross it. And at

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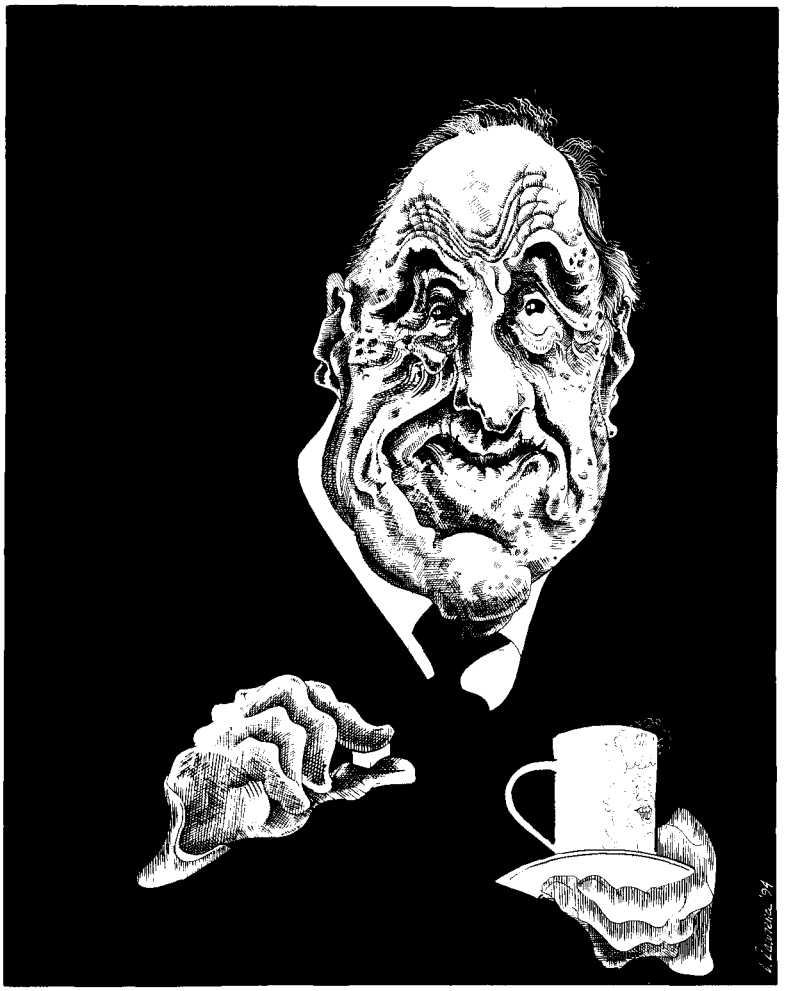
one point or another you usually do."

On two infamous occasions, Gonzalez flattened men who did cross his line. In 1963, shortly after he was elected to the House, Ed Foreman, a Texas Republican, denounced Gonzalez as a "pinko" in the House chamber. Gonzalez punched him out. Twenty-three years later, a man sitting in Earl Abel's, a popular San Antonio restaurant where Gonzalez frequently has breakfast, called him a Communist. (Gonzalez's refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, which he once likened to the "Sieg Heil," rankles some of the folks back home.) "Henry took one poke, and put the guy on the floor," recalls one San Antonian who has watched Gonzalez's career. Gonzalez was 70 years old. "Henry has always been quite proud that in his younger days he was a golden gloves boxer," she says. "He said the only thing for a good American to do when called a Communist is to punch him out."

Those who know Gonzalez from his days as a San Antonio city councilman and state senator in the 1950s and early '60s trace his insistence on personal deference to his early years as a politician. The first Mexican-American to make it in San Antonio politics, Gonzalez did battle against Jim Crow laws and the city's sometimes hostile Democratic machine, the Good Government League.

Gonzalez won his House seat in 1961. His success in Texas politics prompted other Hispanic politicians to trace his steps, including Henry Cisneros, who became San Antonio's mayor in 1981. Gonzalez was wary of his successors, whom he viewed as having had too easy a time of it. He was particularly wary of Cisneros. "I think ego and jealousy had a great deal to do with it," says one San Antonian who knows Gonzalez well. "And the fact that Gonzalez was no longer the one and only king of the mountain. At that point Gonzalez had been in Congress for better than twenty years, and was not nationally prominent. Henry Cisneros very quickly became a national figure." Whenever Gonzalez came to town, Cisneros tried to soothe him by "treating him with proper deference." But Gonzalez remained cool. It wasn't until 1988 that Gonzalez came into power of his own in the House, when Banking Committee Chairman Fernand St. Germain was unexpectedly defeated. By dint of seniority, Gonzalez got the job.



HENRY GONZALEZ BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

And he has held on. Gonzalez's seat is considered practically bombproof. Even after sixteen terms, he carefully cultivates his constituents. "Henry is famous for walking down the street and calling people by name," says one San Antonio Republican. "He has a phenomenal talent for remembering names and faces and the personal details of people's lives."

In Washington Gonzalez keeps his staff, both in his office and on the committee, under tight rein. He has no press secretary, preferring instead to schedule all of his appointments himself. (He returns calls from the press only if he's in the mood; lately he has not been.) Banking Committee staffers are strictly forbidden from speaking to the press.

As a committee chairman, though, Gonzalez controls his turf with a decidedly looser grip. He allows Democrats and Republicans to follow their legislative interests without much meddling. As a result, Banking Committee meetings are notorious for their length. Gonzalez frequently allows witnesses to speak for as long as they like, doing away with the red-light cutoff that other chairmen enforce. At times, Gonzalez will sit back in his chair at a hearing and talk about whatever is on his mind. "Sometimes he'll just reminisce, talk policy, about his overall views," says a Washington lawyer who has appeared several times before the committee. "Frankly, you're very anxious to go to lunch, you have to take a pee or something. And he'll talk for nearly an hour."

Though Gonzalez grants his colleagues relative freedom, there is one unspoken rule about working with him: "The thing to know about Gonzalez is that he is in charge," says one staffer to a Democrat on the Banking Committee. "The worst thing you can do to him is try to tell him how to run his committee." And that is precisely what Jim Leach tried to do. Gonzalez and Leach, the panel's senior Republican, had been feuding publicly for months. Gonzalez was furious at Leach's constant calls

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for hearings, and became more so when the Republican planned to bypass him and use a routine March 24 committee hearing as a forum on Whitewater. Leach's maneuver left Gonzalez with few options. He could sit quietly and watch as Leach took over the hearing, or he could assert his authority as chairman and rule any questions about Whitewater out of order. Neither choice was acceptable to Gonzalez. If he stifled Leach's questions, "he would be providing the public with the first visual image of a cover-up," in the words of a Republican leadership aide. And there was no way Gonzalez would hand over control of his committee to Leach, especially not on television.

So Gonzalez got personal. He canceled the March 24 meeting and delivered his letter to Foley. His purpose in throwing the House doors open on Whitewater wasn't to foil the Republicans, just Leach. Gonzalez himself was said to favor hearings, but refused to embrace the idea as long as he was under pressure from the GOP. By undercutting Leach, he solved all three problems. Leach still gets the hearings he wanted, but not on Gonzalez's stage. And just to make sure Leach knew what hit him, Gonzalez sent him a taunting "Dear Colleague" letter informing him that the meeting had been scuttled. In the letter Gonzalez called Leach, among other things, "obstinate" and "obdurate." About the only thing Gonzalez didn't call him was a commie. •

The truth about Shooting Back.

SHOOTING BLANKS

By Hanna Rosin

Back in 1988, when Jim Hubbard founded a program to teach photography to homeless children, few imagined it would succeed on a grand scale. Yet within two years, Hubbard's Shooting Back mounted an exhibit of 150 photos at the Washington Project for the Arts (WPA)—the second most popular show in WPA's history. The exhibit spawned a three-year tour of the United States and France, a best-selling 115-page book and a movie deal, and it made a celebrity of Hubbard, an ex-UPI photographer with a master's degree in divinity. In hundreds of interviews Hubbard preached about his mission to "help the children fight injustice," and claimed his program would "change their lives in a profound way." Today, as Shooting Back celebrates its fifth anniversary, it has a new office in Minneapolis and a new show at WPA called "Shooting Back from the Reservation," featuring photos by Native American children. Senators Daniel Inouye and Ben Nighthorse Campbell spoke at the opening, and Attorney General Janet Reno invited Hubbard, two of the kids and a drum group to a private reception in her office, where she lately displays a small exhibit of their work.

So what's wrong with this picture? There is a dark side to Shooting Back's glowing success. Hubbard's autocratic management of the organization, and his obsessive control of the photos, has alienated almost everyone involved with the group. This year three of Shooting Back's young photographers plan to sue Hubbard, claiming that he has robbed them of tens of thousands of dollars in profits that are rightfully theirs, including those earned by his sale of their photos to companies like MTV and Mazda. They complain that they remain poor while he rakes in fees on the college lecture circuit. Also, eight of Shooting Back's ten original board members and all of its original staff have quit over Hubbard's intimidation tactics and his commitment to sabotaging the efforts of anyone whose success threatens to eclipse his.

"These parents and children ... are hungry for someone to care," Hubbard wrote in the Shooting Back book. "Daniel Hall, with the sweetest smile in his voice, calls me at the Shooting Back office on a regular basis and asks, 'When are you gonna come pick me up, Jim, so we can take pictures?' " Daniel, however, hasn't spoken to Hubbard in three years. Like Dion Johnson and Charlene Williams—two other kids whose work is featured prominently in the book—he feels Hubbard has taken advantage of him. When Daniel was 9, he shot the picture of a child doing a backflip that appears on the book's cover. The picture has appeared on two C.D. covers, including the cover of a promotional disc put out by Quincy Jones for *Vibe* magazine. Daniel's mother and Charlene's mother each say they refused to sign forms that would have granted Hubbard sole copyright because they were wary of the terms of the agreement. Dion's mother says she signed a permission slip allowing her son to participate in Shooting Back but never signed a copyright form. Hubbard insists he received signed copyright forms from all three, though he could not produce them.

But even if the mothers did return the forms, their lawyer, Mitch Kreindler, believes the agreement would be invalid. Like other free-lance photographers, Kreindler says, the children are entitled to at least 50 percent of the profits. (Shooting Back's sales and royalties totalled $31,500 in 1992, the last year the organization was audited.) "The kids feel they've been ripped off," Kreindler says.

Hubbard counters that the children have profited from the free teaching and equipment Shooting Back has provided. The profits, he says, should be used to offer other kids the same opportunity. He claims the kids can print from the negatives whenever they want. But Hubbard only granted them that right after a long struggle, and he has made it hard for them to take advantage of it. His resistance started in 1991 when Daniel, Charlene and Dion broke from Shooting Back and joined with ex-board member Ella McCall in a new profit-making venture, Dion and Friends. That May, free-lance photographer Lloyd Wolf, who works with Dion, wrote to Hubbard asking that the children be allowed to make prints. Wolf received no response. After

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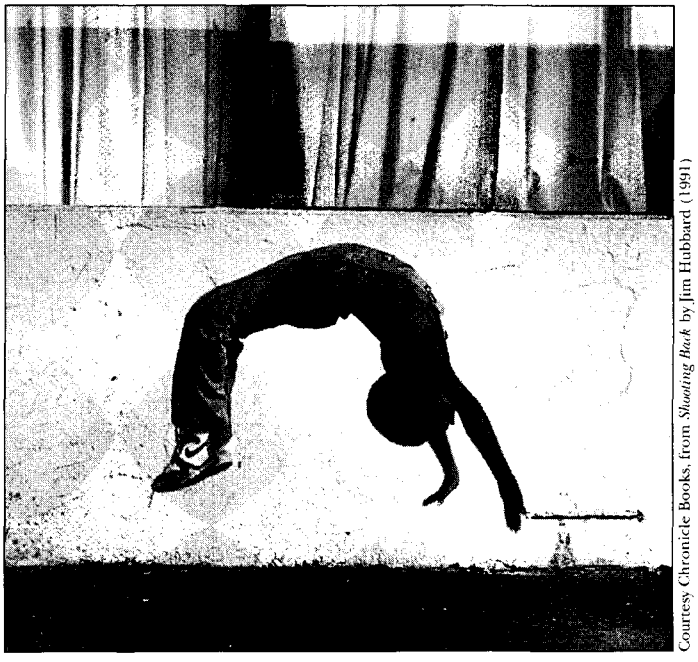
writing a second letter in September, Wolf heard from Shooting Back board member Fred Sweets, a former *Washington Post* photographer. Sweets said the kids could make only two prints each but that Wolf and McCall were no longer welcome on the premises. Last year, to make matters worse, Hubbard moved their negatives to Minnesota—a long way for homeless children to travel.

Hubbard claims that the three defectors were manipulated by Wolf, whom he calls a "traitor," and McCall, who he says is "an opportunist living off the D.C. dole." The kids tell a different story. They say they began to doubt Hubbard in November 1990, when he took them to the Barbie Summit in New York. "It was the chance of a lifetime for these kids," Hubbard later told National Public Radio. The kids remember it more like a work camp. Dion says he was awakened by Hubbard at 5:30 every morning to begin taking pictures that were later used in a promotional campaign for Mattel toys. Charlene and Dion were ordered to sell T-shirts, a total of about 400 at $14 per shirt. When they asked if they would be paid for their work, Hubbard gave them each $10. They say Hubbard would offer them a quarter to sign their photos, which were sold for between $200 and $400.



Courtesy Chronicle Books, from *Shooting Back* by Jim Hubbard (1991)

"FLIP" BY DANIEL HALL

People at Shooting Back who confronted Hubbard with such complaints say he grew hostile and banished them from the organization. That's what happened to former board member Philip Brookman, who was WPA's program director when Shooting Back put on its first show. The trouble began when Hubbard severely restricted how WPA could use the photos to advertise the show—and stole the only proof prints of the photos from the WPA office, according to Brookman. Then, in February 1991 Brookman told Hubbard that the children should get a portion of Shooting Back's profits. "I saw them as no different from any other artist," he says. "It was exploitative to give them a can of film and a camera and then sell the pictures." Soon after, Brookman ran into Hubbard on the street and was told that the Shooting Back board had voted to dismiss him. Other board members emphatically insist that no such vote occurred.

Mounting tensions over Hubbard's conduct led to the resignations of eight board members in September 1992. One ex-member says things went awry a year earlier, when the Meyer Foundation awarded Shooting Back a Management Assistance Grant. Two specialists interviewed each board member for three hours and asked how the organization should evolve. "That was the beginning of the undoing," says the ex-member. "Up to then, Jim thought he was running it and the board was decoration. He felt it was a loss of control. We wanted to push it in a direction of advocacy, and he became hostile." Another problem was Hubbard's speaking fees, the only way in which he profits personally from Shooting Back. Hubbard's agent, Jodi Solomon, says Hubbard has spoken at colleges almost every day for three years, but won't say how much he gets paid. The board has voted that Hubbard's fees should go to Shooting Back, but Hubbard announced at a 1991 meeting that he intends to keep the honoraria for himself.

Hubbard has also strongarmed people involved with the Native American project. Last year he asked Robin Smith, an ex-board member who produced an Emmy Award-winning video on the homeless project, to produce a video on the new program. Smith estimated her costs at $250,000 and began applying for grants. As soon as she received $35,000 from two foundations, however, Hubbard inexplicably changed his mind and signed letters that attacked her work as "culturally insensitive." Hubbard later apologized to Smith and said he would write new letters clarifying his position, but he never did. When I asked Hubbard about the video, he said the project with Smith was "going really well." When I asked him about the letters, he blurted out, "She insulted the American Indian community to such a degree we can't work with her"—but he couldn't name any specific incidents. In fact, people who worked with Hubbard on several Indian reservations describe *him* as the one who was culturally insensitive. "His attitude with the Indians was, 'I am your white savior,' " says one of the project's organizers. M. L. Lincoln, who runs the More Exposure project in Tucson, refuses to work with Hubbard because he won't share his profits. "I asked if he would disburse the money and he went ballistic," Lincoln says. "He promotes his own agenda so much that he takes advantage of the communities."

Lately, it seems that Hubbard is loosening his grip on Shooting Back. His newest copyright form establishes joint ownership of the negatives between Shooting Back and the photographer and allows the photographer to take away the negatives after three years. He even said recently he has "thought about quitting" the organization. But even then he can't imagine being anything but omnipresent. "I think of myself as planting a baby tree," he says. "In the future, when I am gone, the children can always sit in the shade of that tree." •

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The growing power of Russia's mob.

REDFELLAS

By Claire Sterling

There are fifty ways of saying "to steal" in Russian, and the Russian mafia uses them all. It is the world's largest, busiest and possibly meanest collection of organized hoods, consisting of 5,000 gangs and 3 million people who work for or with them. Its reach extends into all fifteen of the former Soviet republics, across eleven time zones and one-sixth of the earth's land mass. It intrudes into every field of Western concern: the nascent free market, privatization, disarmament, military conversion, foreign humanitarian relief and financial aid, even state reserves of currency and gold. And it has begun to creep toward the rest of Europe and the United States—"looking at the West as a wolf looks at sheep," a Russian crime specialist told me.

The Russian mafia is a union of racketeers without equal. Unlike the mafia in Sicily, which it admires and copies as a standard of excellence, it has no home seat or central command. There are no ancestral memories or common bloodlines. Nevertheless, its proliferating clans are invading every sphere of life, usurping political power, taking over state enterprises and fleecing natural resources. They are engaged in extortion, theft, forgery, armed assault, contract killing, swindling, drug running, arms smuggling, prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, embezzling, money laundering and black marketing—all on a monumental and increasingly international scale.

Rising from the ruins of the Soviet empire, the new mafia has far outclassed the one that flourished under Leonid Brezhnev. The mafia was Brezhnev's solution for a stifling centralized economy; it provided illicit goods and services by stealing from the state, buying protection, smuggling, cheating, bullying and bribing its way into the Kremlin. It was *korruptsiya* Communist-style, a shared monopoly of power between politicians and crooks. Liberated Russia deserved better. But the old politicians are still largely in place, yesterday's crooks are today's free entrepreneurs and *korruptsiya*, spreading uncontrollably as things fall apart, has become the curse of a stricken nation. "Corruption," Boris Yeltsin exclaimed last year, "is devouring the state from top to bottom."

In 1991, the year the Communists fell, the All-Union Research Institute of the Soviet Interior Ministry estimated that half the income of an average government functionary was coming from bribes, compared with only 30 percent before 1985. During the late 1980s the Soviet prosecutor-general's office indicted 225,000 state officials for embezzlement, including eighteen who worked for the government's Department to Combat Embezzlement. By 1991, 20,000 police officers were being fired yearly for collusion with the mafia—double the rate under Brezhnev. That same year, Alexander Gurov, head of the Soviet Interior Ministry's Sixth Department to Combat Organized Crime, estimated that four out of five agents in the ministry's militia were on the take.

These were merely symptoms of a malignant growth pervading the economy, the banking system and the body politic. It is common knowledge that millions of ordinary citizens steal state property, trade on the black market, swindle each other and buy or sell protection. Obviously they aren't all tied to the mob: Russia is so chaotic and broke that few people can stay honest and survive. Yet if not all lawbreakers are mafiosi, the mafia swims among them like a great predatory shark, recruiting some, exacting payoffs from others, frightening away rivals. Insatiable and seemingly invulnerable, it swallows factories, co-ops, private enterprises, real estate, raw materials, currency and gold: one-quarter of Russia's economy in 1991, between one-third and one-half by 1992.

Between 1989 and 1991, communism's twilight years, the mafia's take shot up from less than 1 billion rubles to 130 billion—the size of the Soviet national deficit. "In the next few years, its [gross] will reach 200 billion rubles," Gurov said in 1991. "Organized crime will then control 30 to 40 percent of the country's GNP."

Meanwhile, the mafia's kill rate has climbed to a world record. Once, Soviet leaders taunted America for its sixty-odd murders per day—a mark of capitalist depravity. By 1993 murders in the Russian republic alone ran to more than eighty per day. Many of the dead were victims of drunken brawls, armed robbery and gang warfare, but contract killings were increasingly popular: there were 1,500 in 1992. In 1993 ten directors of the country's largest commercial banks were murdered, presumably for failing to extend still more outrageous loans than those they had granted already. And a disturbing number of victims were policemen: nearly 1,000 between 1989 and 1992, according to Interpol Moscow.

By the start of 1992, soon after the Soviet Union's borders opened up, all of its institutions were gone, including those for law enforcement. The Soviet-wide Sixth Department, created by Mikhail Gorbachev three years earlier to fight organized crime, was dismantled along with all other nationwide bodies. No central authority remained to coordinate police intelligence, order arrests, control 36,000 miles of border or oversee the movement of people, money and goods. The only organization fully operational in the new Commonwealth of Independent States was the mafia.

The Russian mafia is richer by far than the forces of

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the law and much better equipped in weapons, communications systems and transport. Members are admitted only with a sponsor, and only after proving their valor by killing somebody on order, preferably a friend or relative—exactly like their Sicilian counterparts. Once in, they risk its death penalties, communicate in a private jargon and flout the tattoos marking their eternal membership: a spider web for drug traffickers, an eight-point star for robbers, a broken heart for district bosses.

The mafia is organized in something like a classic criminal pyramid. First, at the base, are common street hoods, under gang leaders who run their territory like military boot camps. Moscow, for instance, is controlled by twenty criminal "brigades"—some tribal, others regional, others specialized by trade—totaling more than 6,000 armed thugs. Everybody in the city in some kind of business (restaurants, food markets, gas stations, flower stalls, newsstands, casinos, beggars' corners at the Kremlin) is "under somebody" who collects a monthly payoff. The *Dolgoprudnaya*, who drive around in Volvos with heated seats, control the best protection rackets. The *Lyubertsy* run prostitution. The *Solntsevo* run slot machines. The *Ingushy* smuggle contraband leather and skins to Italy. The Azerbaijanis control the drug trade. Then there are the Chechen, with their own army of 600 killers in Moscow. Natives of a self-proclaimed sovereign enclave in the northern Caucasus, the Chechen are the most notorious and versatile of Russia's mafiosi. They will do almost anything imaginable that is illegal.

A level up from the gangs are a "supply" group and a "security" group. The supply group serves as a conduit, ensuring that directives from above are carried out below. The security group is comprised of respectable citizens—journalists, bankers, artists, athletes, politicians—who provide intelligence, legal aid, social prestige and political cover.

On top of the pyramid are the godfathers, the indomitable *vory v zakone* (thieves-within-the-code); they preserve a "thieves' ideology," administer justice and plot strategy. There are 700 known godfathers at large or in prison. Guiding rather than governing, they provide most of the brains for their subalterns. They are not absolute rulers over violently unruly and fiercely competitive gangs. Rather, "each sphere of influence is under their control," according to I. Pavlovich, deputy chief of the Russian Interior Ministry's Sixth Department. Pavlovich says they meet periodically, settle territorial disputes, decide on operations and make policy. Their power inevitably surpasses the fragile Russian government's. Their edicts are instantly transmitted, unmistakably enforceable and almost universally obeyed.

Two stories illustrate how the mafia has of late transformed itself into a formidable force. First, in January 1991 the most powerful thieves-within-the-code gathered from all over the country to discuss a financial emergency. Valentin Pavlov, premier of the crumbling Soviet empire, had suddenly withdrawn all 50- and 100-ruble notes from circulation. His plan, he said, was to stop the illegal flow of rubles out of the country and prevent "a river of dirty money" from coming in. Everybody in the mafia kept illicit cash reserves in these notes, which at the time were the largest denominations issued.

"My operational report showed that these thieves-within-the-code—the supermen, the big-time mafiosi—got together to discuss ways of selling off or exchanging the banknotes for new ones or getting them out of the country," Gurov later said on national T.V. "The thieves-within-the-code decided where the rubles had to be exchanged or smuggled out. Then they gave permission to set aside a quarter of the entire sum for bribing the administration."

The underworld mobilized overnight. "Black-market currency sharks vanished from Moscow," Gurov declared. The ruble notes were rushed to corruptible state factories and banks in remote regions to be exchanged under the counter. The Konkuret co-op, with only 1,000 rubles in its account, changed 190,000 rubles in 50s and 100s into smaller denominations at the local bank. A Novosibirsk shop taking in 10,000 rubles per day "contrived to hand in" 240,000 rubles. Hundreds of millions of rubles were washed with little trouble. Unlike the poor, who lost their lifetime savings because they had been hiding their rubles under their mattresses to dodge the tax collectors, the mafia came out very well.

Then, a few months later the godfathers met again to consider Gorbachev's 500-day program for transition to a free market. They liked it. A free market in the USSR meant not only mobility, relaxed borders and dollars from abroad, but a chance to mount the most colossal criminal buyout in history. For all the wreckage of Russia's economy, it still had the world's richest natural resources. Once privatization got under way, according to Tatjana Kurjaghina, then the Interior Ministry's top social economist, the whole country would be up for sale.

Though few realized it at the time, the Russian mafia was about to make a big strategic leap: from merely feeding off the economy to owning it. To prepare for privatization, however, the godfathers needed to stall the entire government program until January 1992, and they had to impose a new peace among Moscow's eternally warring clans. A truce that they had worked out in 1988, at Dagomys on the Black Sea, had ended in an orgy of bloodshed after barely a year. But the first stage of privatization was an imperative call to order. The logic of peace was unarguable: once inner harmony was restored, the godfathers divided zones of influence and went after the 6,000 enterprises coming up for auction in Moscow. The rules for privatization were fluid, corrupt officials were easily come by and most Russians had no money to speak of. Within weeks, the Russian news agency *Tass-Krim Press* reported that the mafia had "privatized between 50 percent and

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80 percent of all shops, storehouses, depots, hotels and services in Moscow."

Today, according to Yeltsin adviser Piotr Filipov, who heads the Center for Political and Economic Analysis, Russia's mafia controls 40,000 privatized enterprises and collects protection money from 80 percent of the country's banks and private enterprises.

The mafia also controls the drug trade. Nature has endowed Russia and its fellow republics with a prodigal source of narcotics. According to Alexander Sergeev, head of the Interior Ministry's anti-narcotics unit, the ex-USSR produces twenty-five times more hashish than the rest of the world; cannabis grows wild on 7.5 million of its acres—in Kazakhstan, Siberia, the Far Eastern republics, the lower Volga River Basin, the northern Caucasus and southern Ukraine. Luxuriant poppy fields sprawl across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

When Soviet controls were severe, organized crime overlooked this potential bonanza: the chance to create and feed a huge addict population and export for dollars. When communism fell, however, things changed. By 1992 family-sized poppy fields yielding two crops per year were under heavy armed guard. New plantations in Uzbekistan increased by 1,000 percent. Around 200,000 acres were planted in Kyrgyzstan. The number of opium growers in Kazakhstan's Chu Valley tripled. Poppies were planted over 1,000 square kilometers of empty radioactive terrain around Chernobyl. Vladimir Burlaka, St. Petersburg's anti-narcotics chief, estimated that the 1992 crop would be worth $5 billion.

Meanwhile, heroin couriers were moving up from the Golden Crescent through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. They carried forged papers and radio telephones and had paramilitary protection as they crossed the breadth of Soviet territory bound for Odessa, Finland, the Baltic states, Poland, Western Europe and America. The drug mafia was taking over horizontally and vertically, from production and processing to transport, distribution and marketing. Free of centralized surveillance, it moved largely unhindered across the crazy quilt of internal Commonwealth borders, ignoring ethnic tensions.

Underground laboratories were also starting to produce synthetic drugs, such as "Krokodil" and "Chert" (devil), that were 1,000 times stronger than heroin and cheaper than homegrown natural drugs. The most lethal, methyl-fentanyl—diluted in proportions of 1 to 20,000—was made exclusively in Russia.

Soviet cities had always been a drug market of sorts, and it expanded as soldiers got hooked on heroin during the Afghanistan War; but galloping addiction set in only after traffickers mounted their assault around 1985. From then on the addict population doubled yearly. By 1992 Russia had at least 1.5 million addicts and occasional drug users, Sergeev says. (The figure was all the more startling for the carefully preserved fiction that Communist Russia had no addicts whatsoever. In fact, some Russian experts thought the "real" figure was "at least three to four times higher.") Also in 1992 the drug mafia's profits increased nearly fourfold, from 4 billion to 15 billion rubles—this before its first harvest of modernized, commercialized crops.

Sergeev says that Russian mafiosi have been trafficking heroin with Westerners, the Sicilian mafia especially, for nearly a decade. In 1992 they were delivering heroin to Sicilian mafiosi in New York, selling amphetamines elsewhere in the United States and moving cocaine in Vienna, Budapest and Frankfurt. They were said by Interpol Poland to have reached "precise agreements in Warsaw with big German and Dutch cocaine traffickers and Colombia's Cali cartel." That same year a shipment of pure Colombian cocaine shaped into 34,000 pairs of Peruvian-made plastic sandals was spotted in Moscow, heading for Warsaw.

Despite this, and to avoid Yeltsin's displeasure, the U.S. State Department did not list Russia among forty-eight producer or transit countries in its 1992 International Narcotics Strategy Report. No Western government publication did. In another year, though, they would.

In the summer of 1992 Moscow Interpol's deputy chief, Anatoly Terechov, complained, "Less than half our joint ventures work. Only a quarter deal with their declared activities. Two or three out of five are financed with money of dubious origin. Many ... are fictitious. Often they're one-man operations to swing hard currency deals.... At least 500 of our mafia groups use them to link up with international crime—in the United States, Italy, Germany, Austria, France, Canada, Poland...."

Six months later Yeltsin himself adjusted this estimate upward. "At least 1,000 mafia groups have contacts with international organized crime," he said.

The American and Sicilian mafias were the first in, by way of what was to be the biggest black-market currency swap ever: a plan to trade $7.8 billion for 140 billion rubles, enabling the Westerners to buy Russia's natural resources for rubles and sell them in the West for 300 to 400 times more in dollars. (The plan was aborted in January 1991, but similar dollar-for-ruble scams followed.) With the Americans and the Sicilians entrenched, the Russians are moving out into the rest of the world—and they're heading West.

"It's wonderful that the Iron Curtain is gone," says Boris Uvarov, chief serious crimes investigator for the Russian prosecutor-general, "but it was a shield for the West. Now we've opened the gates, and this is very dangerous for the world. America is getting Russian criminals; Europe is getting Russian criminals. They'll steal everything. They'll *occupy* Europe. Nobody will have the resources to stop them. You people in the West don't know our mafia yet; you will, you will."

CLAIRE STERLING is an investigative reporter based in Italy. This article is adapted from her forthcoming book, *Thieves' World* (Simon & Schuster).

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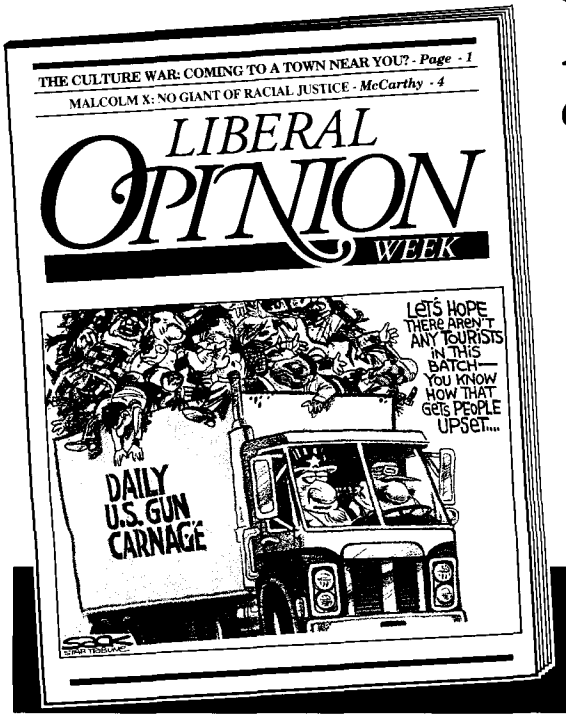
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Why Kozyrev is no problem.

ANDREI THE GIANT

By Stephen Sestanovich

"Surrendering foreign policy to the jingoists," Andrei Kozyrev used to say, "is a kind of Munich." Yet today the same Russian foreign minister who condemned "playing at patriotism" is learning the game himself. Once accused of "infantile pro-Americanism," he now seizes opportunities to dress down the United States. He insists it would be a mistake for Russia to withdraw from all former Soviet territory. And to describe his country's place in the world, he has dusted off a word that had seemingly been retired for good: "superpower."

The Russian foreign minister's new tack has led many to speak of two Kozyrevs: the old and the new; the good and the bad; the soft-spoken liberal and the tub-thumping nationalist. The shorthand can be useful, but in fact the differences aren't all that great. There have always been two Kozyrevs, and if anything they may fit together better now than they used to. The fit—though it may be temporarily confusing—is good news for those who hope Russia will be a constructive international actor.

Kozyrev's path to his current position began six years ago. In 1988, as Mikhail Gorbachev was starting to open up Soviet politics, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze told his staff that foreign—as well as domestic—policy needed a more radical conceptual foundation. Kozyrev, a career diplomat who had spent most of his time on U.N. issues, was the first to answer the call, in a series of articles that pushed "new thinking" further than any official had ever done. He argued, in effect, that Soviet foreign policy had to be completely dismantled. It wasted vast resources, stimulated conflicts in distant regions of no importance and aroused the suspicion of other states with absurd claims of economic, cultural and ideological superiority. Having conducted the cold war for no reason, the Soviet Union had to recast its policies so as to regain the "trust" of others.

In the Soviet foreign ministry this outlook made one something of a visionary; and Kozyrev warmed to his role. In 1989 he was a member of Shevardnadze's entourage at a meeting with James Baker and his aides. Introducing himself to Francis Fukuyama of the State Department's policy planning staff, the author of an even more acclaimed article, "The End of History," Kozyrev is said to have joked, "You know, my colleagues call me 'our Fukuyama.' " But being a celebrity didn't hamper his rise. In the fall of 1990, already promoted by Shevardnadze to head the international organizations division, Kozyrev got a more unusual offer—to become chief foreign policy aide to Boris Yeltsin, then the newly elected head of the Russian Parliament.

In all areas of policy, Yeltsin was looking for talented people from the radical wing of Gorbachev's camp. A young hotshot with experience working for Shevardnadze (who quit the perestroika team himself just two months later) fit the bill perfectly. And because the old system maintained the fiction that each member republic of the USSR had its own foreign policy, Kozyrev's title was very grand: "foreign minister of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic." In December 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, he became the *real* foreign minister, of a new Russia.

To many in the Russian establishment, the idea that this neophyte—he was barely 40—should direct foreign policy was infuriating. Though he was a professional diplomat (and most of his critics were not), they called him an amateur. They saw him as someone who, having risen by destroying Soviet power, would care little about Russia's own interests. They said he worried only about Western approval (he *had* talked a lot about "trust") and made endless "one-sided concessions" to win it.

Kozyrev didn't take the attacks lying down and fought to protect his hawkish credentials. His press adviser recently dredged up quotes from early 1992 to show that Kozyrev was then taking a *tougher* line than some of his detractors—declaring, for example, that Russia's "paramount vital interest" lay in relations with the new post-Soviet Commonwealth. In its dealings with these new states, he had said, Russia "will defend its interests firmly, 'strictly' where necessary, making use of all the opportunities available to us." And, on the issue of the 25 million Russians in the "near abroad," Kozyrev pledged unfailing Russian support from the start. Even naive liberals knew this was a hot-button issue.

Unfortunately, Kozyrev often foiled his own attempts to prove his toughness. He was irredeemably nuanced. While defending Russian minorities, for example, he cautioned that too much solidarity with them might backfire, by creating suspicion between them and the majority ethnic groups with whom they had to co-exist. While lamenting Russia's economic decline, he also claimed to see a "silver lining": erstwhile Soviet clients (the world's "riffraff," he called them) would have to be cut off, and the defense budget slashed. Russia was "a great power [that] has nothing to wear," he remarked, and conservatives said it didn't really bother him.

Now, Kozyrev seems to have learned his lesson. You never hear him suggest, for example, that Russian minorities in the near abroad don't always benefit from Moscow's support. He is more likely to say that "we will never leave our friends alone," or that when the minorities were separated from Russia by the Soviet breakup in 1991 it was "like tearing living tissue."

Beneath the patriotic nuances, however, it's clear that Kozyrev still has fundamental disagreements with his nationalist opponents. It's not just that he still quotes Herzen ("Open hatred of the West is ... open hatred of the whole process of evolution of man-

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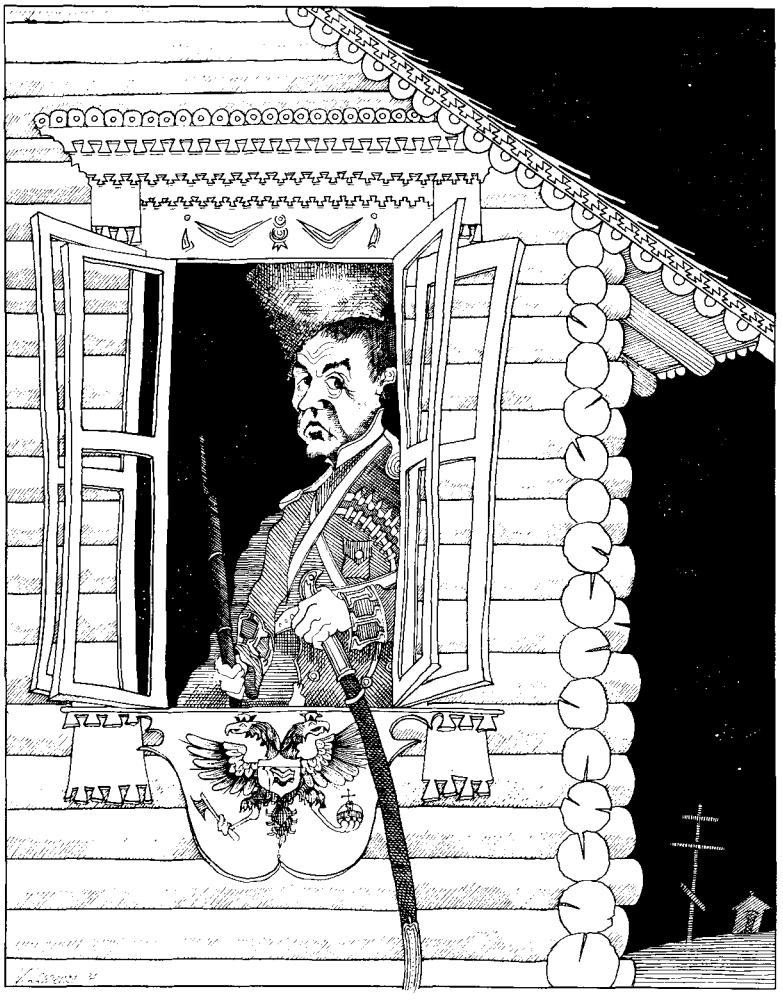
kind"), or that he makes endless fun of Zhirinovsky. (No Russian politician is more scornful of Zhirinovsky than Kozyrev is; he dismisses him as a "medical, not a political, problem," and has proposed a global competition to find a cure.) Most important, he is ready to quarrel with his critics about what their ideas mean.

Take what is now one of the most common phrases of Russian political debate: "Russian national interests." Many who use it take for granted that active pursuit of these interests requires a clash with the West. Some of them ardently desire such a clash, as if only a sharp disagreement with the outside world can show that Russia is again in charge of its own destiny, defining itself rather than being defined by others. For these people, what makes a Russian interest Russian is precisely that others object to it.



ANDREI KOZYREV BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Kozyrev uses the same tough lexicon, but without the implication of incompatibility. He once told an interviewer that he saw no necessary clash between human and national values, and he didn't mean a global idealism. For him, the abstract moralism of the Gorbachev period was "annoying." It treated nationalism as simply parochial and primitive, and assumed that only what was universal was good. Instead, Kozyrev believed a national perspective was the starting point for internationalism. For him, looking out for No. 1 can be reconciled with being a good citizen of the international community, but he has discovered that the idea is a hard sell. His Western friends doubt an assertive Russia can be a cooperative partner, and the fire-breathers back home say that playing by agreed-upon global rules means accepting too many compromises. Each side worries that Kozyrev is the dupe of the other.

For this reason, Kozyrev needed a success that would prove his domestic and foreign doubters wrong. Last year's debate over enlarging NATO helped; it began with a fierce show of Russian opposition to Western policy and ended with agreement on closer military cooperation. But it was, finally, a compromise. February's Bosnia crisis, by contrast, offered Kozyrev a true victory. The NATO ultimatum to the Serbs could have been an immense foreign policy disaster for him, isolating him both at home and abroad. Some Russians have suggested that if the air strikes against the Serbs had taken place, Kozyrev would have had to resign, but even if he hadn't, he would have been seriously weakened. Western governments would have been angered by his defiance; Russians would have said that all his past deference to the West had bought him nothing.

Instead, the last-minute redeployment of Russian peacekeeping forces from Croatia to Sarajevo enabled Kozyrev to show Russian influence, and to stir Russian pride, while staying within an international consensus. (Sure, he irked the State Department by giving them no advance notice, but after he was excluded from NATO's discussion of the ultimatum, this was only tit-for-tat.) The result was an even bigger success for Kozyrev than is generally realized in the West, since he had spent months publicly disagreeing with the military about whether Russia should take part in the U.N. peacekeeping force at all. In *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the military newspaper, he had argued that a Russian contingent in Bosnia was essential "if Russia wants to retain its role as one of the leading forces in the Bosnian settlement and in the Balkans as a whole." Events bore him out. Had Russia not contributed to the U.N. effort before NATO's ultimatum to the Serbs, it would not have been able to act except at far higher risk.

Kozyrev came out of the Bosnian crisis well-armed to rebut the nationalist claim that Russia can only succeed by putting itself at odds with the United States. He now needs to build on this achievement in handling the problems that Russia faces in the near abroad. It won't be easy. When he identifies the emerging "new generation of conflicts" on the territory of the former Soviet Union as the "main threat" to Russian security, Kozyrev expresses a strong national consensus. But the stakes are even higher than that. For many Russians the concrete

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Minority rules

The problems of the new Russian diaspora are as numerous as they are divisive. But discussions of the continuing ethnic explosion in the Soviet successor states have more often than not left Kazakhstan out of the picture.

It's easy to understand why. Rich in resources, open to foreign investment and opposed to all sorts of nasty Islamic fundamentalism, Kazakhstan seems an oasis, particularly compared with the other recently unbound republics. It also looks handpicked to become a Western client state. In 1992 Senator Richard Lugar proclaimed the country's constitution to be "democratic," a quote that quickly made its way throughout the state-controlled media. In a meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Washington last month, President Clinton gave the official U.S. stamp of approval, calling Kazakhstan "a guarantor of democracy."

But is it? Of all the former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan has what may well be the most untenable interethnic predicament—an ethnic Russian population that is nearly as large as the ethnic Kazakh population. (In 1993: Kazakhs 42 percent, Russians 37 percent.) The Russians, moreover, constitute a majority of the population in the northern half of the country, which borders the Russian republic. In the unenviable position of nation-building in an increasingly fragmented multiethnic environment, Nazarbayev has made his strategy clear: build a strong unitary Kazakh state by steadily increasing control over the Russian-dominated provinces of the north.

The strategy is certainly ambitious. It is also wholeheartedly authoritarian, for it focuses on three major initiatives—replacement of the political elites, population movement and Kazakh culture and language popularization.

With regard to elites, Nazarbayev has sought to infuse local administrations throughout the north with loyal Kazakh cadres. Non-Kazakhs in key positions have been removed via presidential appointments.

Nazarbayev has also tried to increase the number of Kazakhs in the north. To this end, his government has channeled diaspora Kazakhs from Mongolia and Uzbekistan into the region. Kazakhs from the south have been offered financial incentives to resettle in the Russian-heavy provinces.

To expand Kazakh language and culture, the government has created the state organization *Kazak Tili* (Kazakh language). Through branches in every district of the country, *Kazak Tili* has opened Kazakh schools, initiated Kazakh language programs and organized celebrations for Kazakh national holidays.

Attempts to widen Kazakh influence in the north have been combined with close monitoring of the ethnic Russian opposition. The government forbids the public expression of political views that seek to breach the integrity of the Kazakh state. And it has not hesitated to intervene when the opposition has appeared to pose a threat. Several Russian organizations have been banned, and the Kazakh government has kept tight control over the Russian media, closing down several newspapers in the process.

It should come as no surprise that Nazarbayev's pro-Kazakh strategy—referred to somewhat ominously as harmonization (*garmonizatsia*)—has left many Russians anxious about their future. But what are they to do? A tide of Russian outmigration, the simplest quick-fix, is almost certainly not in the cards. However little attachment they feel to the Kazakh state, many Russians consider northern Kazakhstan their home. Most were born there; many are second- and third-generation. Few plan to leave. More important, the vast majority of Kazakhstan's ethnic Russians are poor; even if they wanted to, few could afford to leave for a questionable future in Russia.

Instead the Russians have been stepping up demands for dual citizenship, berating the government for discriminatory language policies and discussing secessionist alternatives to Kazakh integration. Staunchly pro-Russian local governments in the north, joined by the few remaining Russian national organizations, have done their best to keep the region Russian. Kazakh plans for mosque construction have been stonewalled. Kazakh school openings have been blocked. Even the appearance of Kazakh literature in street kiosks has been limited. If rarely challenging Kazakh rule directly, the Russians have quietly worked against the policies they view as Kazakhization.

The extent to which Russian opposition will remain quiet, however, is far from certain. In an area where Russians and Kazakhs have coexisted peacefully, ethnic violence is on the rise. Attacks on Kazakhs by Russians have become routine in several northern towns. Both groups are seriously questioning if they will be able to live side by side.

The logical alternative—seceding to Russia—has become increasingly popular. Even more troubling, tendencies for reconsolidation with Russia are exacerbated by the Yeltsin government's increasing predisposition to view ethnic Russians in the "near abroad" as paramount to national security. At a time when Russians in northern Kazakhstan are becoming more likely to call to Russia for support, the likelihood that their calls will be heard has also increased.

Recent events give little cause for optimism. A revised draft of the language law alludes to the need for more forceful methods of introducing the Kazakh language. Even more foreboding are developments surrounding Kazakhstan's parliamentary elections, which took place in early March. An aide to Nazarbayev described a process of candidate-sifting designed to keep unwelcome "radicals" out of the government. Though Russians cried foul play, accusing Nazarbayev of knocking out Russian candidates, the Kazakh government did not budge. Charges from Max, a popular nationwide television and radio station, that the authorities were violating election laws led to its official closing. European election monitors were openly critical of the proceedings.

Despite all dangers, the Kazakh government clearly believes that it will win in the long run. The reasoning is straightforward—immigration combined with high birth rates will eventually shift the balance of power to the Kazakhs. There are, however, good reasons to believe that Kazakhstan will not make it that far. Nazarbayev's hopes of interethnic harmony remain confronted with a substantial obstacle: the Russians are not buying it. And let there be little doubt: the Russians do have power. Objections to Kazakh policies have already forced the government to cancel the introduction of new registration cards and passports.

Kazakhstan, once an exception, now a rule, seems headed for the ethnic conflict that has shaken so much of the former Communist world. In fact, the only thing that doesn't seem to be in Kazakhstan's immediate future, U.S. claims notwithstanding, is democracy.

IAN BREMMER

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issues of Russian policy in the near abroad—the rights of Russian minorities, military basing agreements, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and so forth—are simply potential points of leverage for restoring Russian dominion. For this reason, the near abroad—from Ukraine to Central Asia—is the stage on which will be settled the question not only of reviving the Soviet Union but also of reviving the cold war. As Zbigniew Brzezinski argues in a powerful piece in the current *Foreign Affairs*, the U.S. interest in "partnership" won't survive if Russia embarks on the re-creation of the Soviet empire.

Characteristically, Kozyrev's approach is to dodge the either/or choice. He promotes, issue by issue, a tough set of Russian objectives in the near abroad, but consistently denies that Moscow needs or wants outright control to achieve them. Some Western analysts have claimed that Kozyrev asserts a right of military intervention in these areas. The opposite is true: he *renounces* it, declaring that Russian troops may enter only where they are asked by host governments.

The same pattern is clear in his interest in getting foreign peacekeeping forces to police ethnic and other conflicts. Russian troops are already present throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus, occupying bases left over from the Soviet period. And it's not just guard duty: during the past year, Russian units have been deeply involved in civil wars in Tajikistan and Georgia. In light of this record, Kozyrev's proposal that the West offer international authorization and even funding for Russian operations might seem astonishing; he adds, a little petulantly, that those who won't ease Moscow's heavy peacekeeping burden should at least stop their lectures about how Russian forces don't always live up to U.N. standards.

Yet Kozyrev also reminds his countrymen of what *they* need to do. The world, he says, won't offer carte blanche for exclusively Russian operations. It demands mixed contingents and effective verification mechanisms, so that if Russian "blue berets" are on the scene everyone will know what they're doing. (He points out, just to prove that great powers accept such indignities, that this is how Russia kept tabs on U.S. forces in Somalia.)

The very idea of international peacekeeping on Russia's periphery has seemed altogether farfetched, and yet Kozyrev seems to be wearing the skeptics down. The United States has now agreed to the first peacekeeping operations on former Soviet territory—a small observer force in Georgia, with U.N. funding and Russian troops forming the largest single national contingent. It's a small step, but a start. Kozyrev says he wants similar units, again with a core of Russian troops, in Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. What he has in mind will hardly pacify the near abroad, but it has the potential to do something very important: help discipline the pursuit of Russian ends through the application of Western means.

Does such a possibility justify Russian-American partnership? Brzezinski doubts it; he disparages the idea that Russia has an interest in "regional stability," and Russia's new truculence might seem to bear him out. But our analysis of the post-Soviet world cannot be driven simply by Russian blarney. Kozyrev himself has seemed to threaten the Ukrainians, Kazakhs and others with economic coercion (depending on how they treat their Russian minorities), and yet the world's leading provider of aid to Ukraine continues to be ... Russia. Trade figures show that in 1993 this aid totaled $7 billion, half of it in energy exports for which Ukraine paid little or nothing. Russia has also encouraged economic cooperation between provinces on the Russo-Ukrainian border, so that ethnic Russians don't feel they have to be part of Russia to benefit from better economic conditions there. (A serious policy of "destabilization" would try to make Russians feel the pain of separation; Russia, by contrast, is trying to ease it.) As for Crimea, where Brzezinski fears a "Russia-abetted ethnic explosion," Kozyrev's spokesman endlessly repeats that its status is an "internal" Ukrainian matter. Foreign ministry sources tell *Izvestia* that Moscow will lean on Crimea's new Russian leader "to incline him toward a dialogue with Kiev."

Stability, of course, can be consistent with empire, and for now no one can prove that the Russians don't want both. They may be playing a very long game toward Ukraine and don't want to be blamed for provoking an early crisis. With the Kiev government itself doing so much to destroy Ukraine, why bring criticism on Russia by trying to hurry things along? In the best of circumstances Ukraine's fate will not be settled for a long time. But for now Russia's stake in stability means that a policy of partnership can in fact be based on parallel U.S. and Russian interests.

This assumption made possible January's trilateral agreement in which Moscow, Washington and Kiev worked out a formula for Ukrainian denuclearization (and in which Moscow unconditionally committed itself to respect Ukrainian territorial integrity). There will be times when we find Russian policy toward Ukraine a lot less constructive than we do now, but partnership can hardly be ruled out because we aren't sure our current broad agreement will last forever. Which of our alliances offers us that kind of certainty?

It is sometimes said that Andrei Kozyrev has become a nationalist for reasons of political survival. It's working: in the December elections he won an overwhelming victory in a crowded field in the northern port of Murmansk, a military stronghold he had visited only twice before. But this explanation is inadequate. Kozyrev's nationalist rhetoric aims less at keeping him in Parliament than at keeping Russia on its westward track. For the time being, the West has the luck of dealing with a nationalism whose very purpose is international partnership. When we face the alternative, we'll know the difference.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Overlooked Muse

One of the most fruitful (and least examined) influences of film is its effect on poets. Much is written about the ways that film has contributed to the shaping and subject matter of fiction, but there is little about the ways that film has touched poetry. This is strange for at least two reasons. First, film has been the subject of a notable amount of poetry and has been a wellspring of metaphor for poems that have nothing directly to do with film. Second, poets were among the first to respond to film with serious criticism. The first American book of film aesthetics was *The Art of the Moving Picture* by Vachel Lindsay, published in 1915 (republished in 1970 with an introduction by yours truly). Lindsay subsequently wrote some film criticism for TNR. Others who wrote film criticism back then were William Ellery Leonard, H.D. and Carl Sandburg.

The impact of film on poets has long needed celebration, and at last it has been provided by the poets themselves—through the agency of Philip French and Ken Wlaschin. They have edited **The Faber Book of Movie Verse** (Faber & Faber, 458 pp., $24.95), and were aptly qualified to do so. French is the long-term film critic of the (London) *Observer* and the author of several film books and literary studies; Wlaschin ran the London Film Festival for fifteen years, now does similar work for the American Film Institute and has published poetry and novels. French has provided the book's informative introduction and the notes on film facts for the poems that can use this help.

Together French and Wlaschin offer a testament of poets to their bewitchment by film from its first days—even earlier than that. (The first poem is by Austin Dobson, b. 1840, whose "The Toyman" is about the thaumatrope, a persistence-of-vision device that preceded film.) The book contains 340 poems by 227 English-language poets, an important qualification because it's reasonable to infer that a significant number of poets in other languages have responded comparably.

The editors have divided their anthology into eight sections "organized on a partly chronological and partly thematic basis" and worth noting in themselves: The Silent Cinema, Hollywood, Movie Houses and Moviegoing, The Stars and the Supporting Cast, Behind the Camera, Films and Genres, Movies as Metaphors, T.V. and The Afterlife of Movies. I began by looking for some favorites, and they are all present: Hart Crane's "Chaplinesque," the earliest beautiful poem I know that was inspired by film, Randall Jarrell's marvelous ramble through memory, "The Lost World," Robert Frost's wry and cautionary "Provide, Provide."

But how many there are—by well-known poets—that I had either forgotten or never read. Vernon Watkins's "Elegy" in memory of Pearl White. Jean Garrigue's "Movie Actors Scribbling Letters Very Fast in Crucial Scenes." Roy Fuller on Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympiad* ("No art can hide the shocking gulfs that gape / Even between such bodies and their world"). Robert Lowell's unusually light "Harpo Marx" ("your hands white-feathered the harp"). Richard Wilbur's even lighter "The Prisoner of Zenda," about the 1952 version with Stewart Granger as the dashing impostor, Rudolph Rassendyll:

> One redeeming factor,
> However, is that the actor
> Who plays the once-dissolute King
> (Who has learned through suffering
> Not to drink or be mean
> To his future Queen),
> Far from being a stranger,
> Is *also* Stewart Granger.

A few cavils about the better-known poets. Why include Lowell's "Scar-Face" and Wilbur's "Beasts," which have no demonstrable connection with film? And why Stephen Spender's decrepit "The Truly Great," just because Spender said elsewhere that the closing images were drawn from Eisenstein?

But especial thanks to the editors for unearthing lovely poems by less-known people. A few examples. Michael McFee's "Buster Keaton":

> Into the frenzy of falling bodies
> and chaos of pastry, apollonian
> and sober even as an infant,
> he came, just as decades later
> he would calmly step into a frame
> and never leave.

Edwin Morgan's "Five Poems on Film Directors"—Antonioni, Grierson, Warhol, Kurosawa, Godard—each of which epitomizes a cinema style in prosody. Israel Halpern's poignantly symbolic

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Four Weddings and a Funeral. *Brightness falls from the air—British air. Hugh Grant breezes through a sprightly comedy romance, assisted (fairly well) by Andie MacDowell and (very well) by British actors. (Reviewed 3/4/94)* **Germinal.** *The center of Zola's novel is fumbled somewhat, but Claude Berri captures the atmosphere impressively. (3/21/94)* **Raining Stones.** *Subtitles would have greatly helped this account of English working-class troubles. Still, Ken Loach takes us right into the lives and sharply trimmed hopes of his people. (3/28/94)* **Schindler's List.** *Thanks to Steven Spielberg, a monumental rendering of the true story of the Nazi businessman who dared to save 1,200 Jews. Gives new luster to the word "memorable." (12/13/93 & 1/24/94)* **—SK**

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"Lead Star Lovers" ("We met on the cutting room floor / Examining one / Another's rushes"). Al Young's chuckly "W.H. Auden & Mantan Moreland," which arose from the fact that the poet and the black comedian died on the same day. They meet in paradise and exchange dictions.

Not surprisingly, there is something more than a sprinkling of poems about war films. They range in time and point of view. Teresa Hooley, in "A War Film," sees the Mons Retreat of World War I in a newsreel "as in a dream," but an unforgettable one. Decades later, Lucien Stryk, a World War II veteran, reveals in "Watching War Movies" how his experience altered the course of his life. By now, film has become in some degree an artifact of war, and in some degree the reverse is also true.

The closing poem, more than fittingly, is Mona Van Duyn's "Endings," which begins with "setting the VCR when we go to bed / to record a night owl movie." Next evening "we" watch; apparently her companion gets impatient with it, but the poet insists on seeing it all:

> For what is story if not relief from the pain
> of the inconclusive, from dread of the
> meaningless?
> .... I'll follow, past each universe in its
> spangled
> ballgown who waits for the slow-dance of
> life to start,
> past vacancies of darkness whose vainglory
> is endless as death's, to find the end of the
> story.

Stipulate that the French-Wlaschin selections vary in quality—a bit more widely than we normally expect in anthologies. Nonetheless, this book goes on the shelf next to Geoffrey O'Brien's *The Phantom Empire* with the same gratitude for an affirmation: not all poetic responses start in Yeats's "foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart." Some of them start at the movies. •

In the ruins of communism, a new mess.

Undialectical Materialism

BY TATYANA TOLSTAYA

December 1992. A long time ago, or perhaps not very long ago at all. (Khasbulatov is still speaker of the Parliament.) I arrive in Russia after a long absence, and every friend thinks it his or her duty to enlighten me about politics. Regretting my profound ignorance, but still fond of me, my friends patiently explain, as if talking to someone who is color-blind, the various shades of the political spectrum. Here we have the dark, violet-red conservative region, where fascists, Communists and extreme nationalists gather; these vipers and vermin want to reunite the Soviet Union and herd free peoples behind the barbed wire of the empire and forbid free trade, free sex and free speech. They are the bad guys. And here is the bright, shining, blue-green realm where radicals, progressives and reformers romp. They want to liberate prices, republics, peoples, criminals and anyone who wants liberation. They are the good guys.

The good guys demand freedom of speech for their enemies, and insist that the greatest misfortune of liberalism in Russia is the closing of some fascist newspaper calling for the assassination of Russian liberals (with the addresses of the particular liberals provided for convenience). I asked whether I might not choose some reasonable centrist party with a realistic program as the object of my sympathies, and it was patiently explained to me that no, I couldn't, and here's why ... and there ensued a complicated explanation with details comprehensible only to someone who hasn't slept for twenty-four hours and follows

Lenin's Tomb:
The Last Days of the Soviet Empire
by David Remnick
(Random House, 576 pp., $25)

all the microscopic, maddeningly swift changes in the program, the motives and the actions of that particular party. And the other reason is ... and there followed an even more complex explanation of what one or another step of these unpleasant centrists would lead to.

One friend, a poet, even read me a poem that he had written setting forth the political situation in popular form, which included an assessment of the past and a prognosis for the future, but mostly made fun of one of the centrist parties. The verse was supposed to

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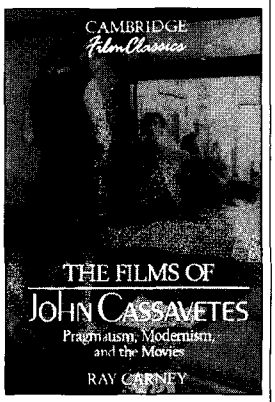

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shame dunces such as myself, who sit in America for a whole year at a time and, on returning to Russia, don't recognize a thing: "Who's that? And who's *that*? . . . What's that, our *president*?" It was three o'clock in the morning, and my 18-year-old son and I were a little tired of this Russian ritual, I mean sitting up till the wee hours talking poetry and politics. (No one makes you do it, of course. You just hate to waste time sleeping. The day is for errands, the night is for eternity.)

"Let's take a walk and get some fresh air," I suggested. "We can get some more cognac," the poet agreed. We set out. Nighttime Petersburg was deserted. Vasilevsky Island—the unrealized dream of Peter the Great, who planned to turn this bit of swamp land into a Venice, or at least an Amsterdam, by cutting it into dozens of canals—was steeped in gloom and frozen silence. My friend quoted Brodsky: "Neither country, nor churchyard do I wish to choose / To Vasilevsky Island I'll return to die." "God forbid!" my son and I responded, almost in unison. "Better he should never return, better he should live," said the poet, an admirer of Brodsky. We walked along the streets that were not fated to become canals, regretting this as always, and trying to remember why, 280 years ago, the tsar's plans hadn't worked. Either the architects had incorrectly measured the width of the canals, or more likely the bureaucrats had pilfered and the treasury was empty. The usual Russian problem: grandiose ideas, and then thievery; exalted dreams, and then incompetence. "If there were canals, they would have trashed them anyway," my son noted. "Why?" "Because a Russian walking across a bridge can't resist spitting or throwing something over." "That's true," we conceded, "and that's why Russians are unconquerable."

That December night the island was scary. The avenue along which we walked was torn up, as if the late emperor (who loved to work with his hands) had finally risen from the grave himself to cut the first canal. Heaps of clay along both sides of the trench, pushed back to the walls of the buildings, had frozen and hardened. You could easily fall and break your leg. And the buildings themselves were in frightening condition. One was blackened by a recent fire, another had no roof, another looked like the Colosseum, I mean a ruin, and on the balconies of some buildings, as if in a surrealist painting, trees had sprouted and grown, and the balconies themselves hung threateningly, ripped by powerful roots.

Finally we got to the place (it was called a "night bar-shop," God knows why) where you could buy cognac. On a corner, at knee-level, behind a tiny grilled window, a red light bulb burned. The poet got down on all fours and knocked. The window opened almost immediately. Through the crack you could see a tiny space, and a young, bearded face in a fur hat, and beyond him, in the half-dark, you could just make out a stack of crates. "Is there any cognac?" "Yes." "Not poisoned?" "No, people drink it, they're still alive." "O.K." Cognac and money changed hands. The bills passed through easily, but the bottle took some doing.

Around the corner the huge, icy Neva River lay and breathed cold; and beyond it, weakly illuminated, still luxurious buildings, the tall, snow-covered trees of gardens and the high gold cupola of St. Isaac's Cathedral stood in silence. The three of us, kneeling and squatting with bottle in hand, thickly swaddled against the frost, must have looked something like a rowdy Flemish genre scene trapped in a Canaletto. "Lord, what have they done to the empire!" I said, looking around. "Who?" asked the poet. At home we poured the cognac and drank to Gorbachev. Ask me why—I don't know.

A year and a month later, in January 1994, I am there again, and again we toast Gorbachev. Not because anybody wants him back; I've never met anyone who did. But in many houses, when toasting friends, and the fact that we are alive and well, people drink to Gorbachev, and no one protests, no one puts down a glass in indignation. They drink to Gorbachev the way they drink to lost youth, to first love (even if it ended in betrayal), to spring, hope, the dawn, the beginning of a journey, whatever. They drink to him because he didn't drink, or because he pretended not to drink. Because life was good then. Because he unclenched his fist and let go of Eastern Europe and eased our collective conscience. People drink to his southern accent and to his bad grammar. And to humiliation. After all, he lost. We don't like winners, we like losers, because that's what we are, each and every one of us. We kill tsars, then we dig up their graves and, sobbing, kiss their white bones.

Courtesy Reuters/Bettmann

ANTI-MOSCOW DEMONSTRATION IN VILNIUS

In January 1994 no one talks about politics and no one explains anything, no matter how much I ask. No one understands anything. No one believes in anyone or anything. "Yeltsin has only four months to live, you'll see. He'll die of cirrhosis of the liver. He's only capable of working four hours a week," they tell me. The repetition of the number four bothers me, I want more variety. "And then what?" "Who the hell knows. The abyss." The government? "They're bastards." The Parliament? "You can see for yourself." "And your friend, the progressive millionaire," I ask my poet friend, "on whom you placed such high hopes?" "Oh, he's an asshole like the rest of them." "And this one? That one? The other one?" "Idiots, crooks, bastards." "Who are you voting for now?" "I don't know. I don't care." But the poet's verse has clearly gotten better. Isn't that the

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most important thing?

Petersburg is thickly covered with commerce, with kiosks in which almost everything is sold. The prices are incredible, much higher than European ones. (The primary goods are alcohol, cigarettes, chocolate and Tampax.) There is no longer any need to crawl along excavated streets to a "night bar" and knock on a frozen window. You can buy four kinds of Absolut vodka (no guarantee of authenticity) around the clock, as well as Glenlivet, and cognac (according to the papers, 100 percent fake) and Makarov, Suvorov, Lev Tolstoi and Rasputin vodkas. The saleswoman yawns and says: "You know perfectly well it's all the same. They bottle it in Poland and we paste on the labels." "Lev Tolstoi and Rasputin are the same?" exclaimed my friend. "What is this, relativism, deconstructivism, postmodernism?" "If you don't like it, don't buy it," says the saleswoman. "No one's forcing you." Nectarines are $5 per pound. Cheese runs up to $13. A liter of juice is $2. A Petersburg University professor makes $25 per month. (You don't have to eat, no one is forcing you!) But there are happy surprises, too: a medicine that I bought in America for $50 turned out to be so cheap in Russia that I bought fifteen jars and paid only five cents for it. (I should have bought thirty jars.)

Moscow isn't much different from Petersburg, except that there is more snow, less crime, cleaner water and the buildings are better heated. You have the impression that everyone is buying, selling, investing, exchanging, pricing everything. My apartment in Moscow is on the ground floor next to a store, so I am subject to many uninvited incursions. Across the landing, in rooms that two years ago were a warehouse for the "Democratic Russia" party bookstore, they now store goods of some kind. I open the door and the guys who work there shamelessly stare into my apartment: "What office is that?" As if there is no longer any such thing as an apartment. At 8 in the morning the doorbell rings, a foreigner has got the wrong door: "Please, Dresdner Bank. . . . " Don't tell me my crumbling two-story building, which will soon be razed by bulldozers, can be mistaken for the Dresdner Bank. What is he, blind?

You can't help recalling the humane Gorbachev era, the simplicity of the mores—no parties, no banks, no commerce. Back then, the people who mistakenly rang my doorbell wanted something entirely different. A provincial fellow banged on my door with two fists, loudly demanding that I let his wife in to pee. "Have a conscience!" he cried, "the woman wants to urinate." Thieves who had just broken into the church next door offered to sell me icons. An Estonian magazine thought that I was the office of an English newspaper and sent a letter proposing critical pieces on the Russian oppressors; all the English paper had to do was commission them, and they would be pleased to write anything on any conditions.

In January of this year, by contrast, anything and everything is for sale, or is advertised in the stores, in the streets, in the kiosks, in the subway: a hornless goat and a construction crane; lemon tree saplings; a Cossack calendar, which informs you that there exists a "secret Cossack fellowship," something like a mystical order, with unusual occult powers accessible only to Slavs, as "scientists" have shown; kiwis; horoscopes; "Amaretto di Saronno," manufactured, as is well-known, in a Moscow suburb; expired margarine; expired olives; expired Milky Way bars; real Marlboros and fake Marlboros; fascist newspapers; dozens of new literary journals; matches with a picture of biceps and the word "Bodibilding"; used slippers; Volvos; roses; Avocado face crème (expired); six kinds of matzo; hard currency and Chinese weight-losing crème. In the bakeries they were selling a cake called "The Heart of a Croat," whatever that meant, and the new "commercial stores" had pretty names like "Curare Supermarket."

The metro in Moscow, which has lost its shine, its luster and its cleanliness, had nine fires last year, because rats chewed through the cables. A joyous female voice continuously offers vacations in the United Arab Emirates to the crowd of tired Muscovites that descends into the warm, stinking underground pit. People listen, patient and aloof: they're used to it, just as they're used to their harmless idiot neighbor. A friend of mine was amazed to discover that her 14-year-old son didn't know when the October Revolution took place (no one bothered to tell him). My niece, who's about the same age, went off to the Mausoleum to look at Lenin, "before they throw him out." "Well," I asked, "what did you think?" "Junk," she said. "There's nothing to see. He's all yellow and dried up." In the eyes of this child, the Mausoleum, which is the Kaaba of communism, was no more distinctive than a regular kiosk selling expired goods. The founder of the Soviet state, the sacred corpse and destroyer of Russia, its culture, its people, its peasants and intellectuals, its incalculable treasures, its cities, its religion, this figure was no more valuable than a hornless goat or stinky Marlboros made in

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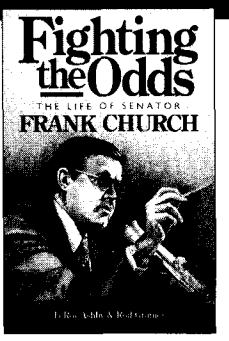
—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.



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Chişinau. How swiftly the past buries its dead!

Books on Russia tend to date quickly, but David Remnick's book, which has received much proper praise, is not likely to suffer this fate. It tells the story of a remarkable four-year period in Russian history—the years of agony, upheaval, confusion and hope at the fall of communism. Such times are unique. To have witnessed them is a coup for a journalist, and to read an account of this important period is a captivating and educational experience. In Russia, or rather the Soviet Union, those four years were seen as a perpetual spring, partly because Gorbachev came to power in March, and partly because in our climate the arrival of spring is drawn out and difficult: warm days alternate with freezing ones, it sometimes seems that summer will not come this year, and then suddenly you think that all the trees will be heavy with fruit tomorrow. What a windfall for cheap symbolism.

How many bombastic, emotional articles were written, how many bad but touching poems! Every event seemed momentous. I remember one friend, a journalist, who would enthusiastically assure me after every democratic demonstration, "It was a Bloodless February Revolution!" "It was a Bloodless March Revolution!" and so on. How Russians loved Estonians, just because Estonians didn't love Russians. How horrified we were after the demonstrators were shot in Tbilisi. What a furor there was after the Congress of People's Deputies booed Sakharov and refused to let him speak. How readers devoured everything in print, how the subscriptions to magazines and journals soared. *Novy Mir*, which began publishing Solzhenitsyn after a quarter of a century of silence, zoomed up to 3 million! And how everyone awaited the arrival of Solzhenitsyn himself. (Now subscriptions to *Novy Mir* have fallen to 50,000, and will probably fall further, and other journals survive solely on the sponsorship of Soros, and Solzhenitsyn's books, bundled in twine, collect dust on hawkers' tables in the underground subway passages, where no one buys them, and Solzhenitsyn is finally about to arrive, though nobody is waiting for him anymore.)

No less important is that Remnick's book reads like a documentary detective novel, almost like a work of fiction, in which the author himself plays an important role. At the end of this 500-page account readers are left with the grateful feeling that they have been led through the labyrinth of Russian names, events and cataclysms by a charming and witty guide, not an odious, mercenary cicerone. Happily, Remnick avoided the standard, squeamish genre of "Russia through the Eyes of a Foreigner," which has been practiced for centuries: Now that I have returned successfully, rested and am drinking coffee in my spotless study, the time has come to tell you, dear friends, of the horrors of my journey through Muscovy and Tartary and so on.

I should note that the most active practitioners of this genre, for the last twenty years or so, have been Russian émigrés, who turned themselves into instant "foreigners" as soon as they crossed the border and were filled with a three-penny snobbery about their former homeland, as if they had been only victims and not active participants in the absurdities of Soviet life. The best example of this is the New York-based émigré newspaper, *Novoe Russkoe Slovo*, but a recent, typical, nauseating example may be found, and I choose at random, in the journal *Slavic Review*, fall 1993: "Many of us have spent more than one excruciating night in Soviet restaurants eating what we thought was bad food while badly dressed people danced badly to bad music." And further: "... Western intellectuals, myself included, have been dismayed by the Russian public's laserlike ability to zero in on the very worst of the wretched refuse of capitalism's teeming pop culture shore. Karate films, heavy metal music, professional wrestling—you name it; they like it."

I take particular pleasure in noting that Remnick is devoid of this cultural racism. He doesn't make idiotic generalizations, he doesn't attribute implausible intentions and motivations to his subjects, he doesn't lie, he doesn't confuse; nor does he assume the pose of an aristocrat, who, wearied by the people's foolishness, extends the local peasant two limp fingers from his lace cuffs. He doesn't try to rise above his characters or above his readers. With a sort of boyish pleasure, Remnick plunges into the lively chaos of a fast-changing society and draws vivid portraits of our heroes, monsters and cranks (the three functions are often combined in one person).

Remnick's objective is the unearthing of truth, and his book opens with a genuine, entirely unmetaphoric unearthing: soldiers opening a mass grave of victims of the Stalinist regime—executed Polish officers—near Kalinin. Digging of another kind, in archives, is carried on by a remarkable schoolboy (later a university student) called Dmitri Yurasov, who in childhood single-handedly established the truth about hundreds of thousands of those who perished in the camps. The truth, or rather the thousands of truths, in multiple versions, are discovered by journalists, historians, writers and just ordinary people. Remnick himself participates in these quests, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, finding and collecting individual pieces of the dispersed mosaic of the past. Sometimes the witnesses lie, heaping new myths on the mountain of old ones that have already been exposed. Sometimes they simply shut up. That was the tactic of Kaganovich, the last dinosaur of the Stalinist regime. Locked in his apartment, once an all-powerful satrap, and now a pensioner and a champion domino player in his neighborhood, he kept his silence.

"Reporting is often foolish work, but there was something especially shaming about knocking endlessly on a tyrant's door," Remnick writes. He kept knocking on Kaganovich's door for four years, but managed to see the stubborn old man only in his coffin. On the other hand, almost comically horrified with himself, he drank *chacha*, or Georgian moonshine, with Stalin's son, and they drank to the executioner's memory. He ate pot roast and potatoes with an old Stalin supporter named Korniyenkova, who was desolate because Stalin made one mistake: he died too soon. He dined with the famous Stalinist Nina Andreeva, and notes that Russian reactionaries "were fine cooks."

That, by the way, is a remarkably accurate observation. Remnick doesn't linger over this amusing detail, but I have observed that Russian liberals are often horrible cooks; and they are as proud of their bad cooking as they are of their bad service (cracked plates, different size cups and so on). This stems, surely, from the traditional poverty of the Russian intelligentsia, from its revolutionary asceticism, from the shame that democratically inclined citizens feel about their own advantages, when they reflect on those who have nothing to eat at all. The cooking of Russian liberals is a kind of guilty homage to the old cliché, "poor but honest." What might seem like a harmless caprice, however, has a terrible consequence. The ascetic liberal doesn't respect the desire of other people for order and comfort, and thus his ideas of reform are completely alienated from human needs. He dreams of the spirit moving upon the face of the waters, but at the same time he wants the earth below to be without form and void.

As a writer, Remnick was lucky. Just as his tour of duty ended, the August coup took place, resulting in the so-called "victory of democratic forces." It's hard to imagine a better gift for a journalist. What's dinner without dessert? Still, leafing through *Lenin's Tomb*, you can't help

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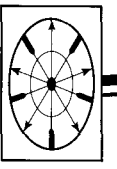
asking: Well, and if the putsch hadn't happened, what would this book look like? If events had just continued to whirl like colors in a kaleidoscope, without the growing tension, and if life had just kept on getting "better and better," despite all sorts of minor unpleasantness, could the author have found the necessary mortar to hold his structure together? Wouldn't the entire book have collapsed into a series of portraits and adventures?

It is an unfair question, but I ask it in order to answer it in Remnick's favor. And the question isn't provoked simply by idle curiosity. The joys of August 1991 are long in the past; former friends have become enemies; the siege of the "White House" was horrible, and it divided the already broken ranks of the intelligentsia; Yeltsin is inept; the democrats are irresponsible; Zhirinovsky won a surprising amount of support in the elections; the people are angry and foolish; the authorities are corrupt from top to bottom; the new constitution is dangerous. And the future is obscure. To divine it, you must search the past for clues.

Does it hold any clues? Of course it does. And so Remnick's book is still pertinent, because the characters and the processes that it describes are not colored retrospectively by the "happy ending" of August. Remnick resisted the temptation of a happy ending. (It must have been very tempting, too: you have a group of old-regime villains, a new generation with an awakening consciousness, ideas of "democracy" taking root, the winds of change, McDonald's, everything will be fine....) Reading Remnick's book, you feel it was possible to predict December 1993, though the abyss separating the two periods is enormous. Remnick conveys clearly, for example, how the features of nationalism could be discerned in the thick dust of collapsing "communism." Unfortunately, the rise of nationalism is a natural process. If the empire is doomed to fall apart, then what can possibly emerge from its ruins, except hundreds of nationalistic formations? Democracy? Not a chance. If the empire had been capable of transforming itself into a democratic state, then why would it have needed to collapse?

No, Remnick doesn't know the future, but the future seeps through his text. Even the photographs reveal much more than their captions lead you to expect, and the clues are not only in the expressions on people's faces. In one photograph we see an angry old woman holding a poster and threatening someone with her fist. The caption reads: "Here a woman in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, joins in an anti-Moscow demonstration." Fine, as far as it goes. But the poster is disturbing: it depicts a troika of horses with unpleasant human faces identified by some names. One "horse" is a caricature of a Russian with a Russian name; another is a caricature of a Jew, with a Jewish name. Over the troika is a star, it looks something like a Soviet star, but it has six points. The poster's message is clear: "Down with Jews and Communists, down with foreigners, they are to blame for all the woes of our people." And in another photograph, a woman holds her sick son's passport and a jar of water. The "healer," Kashpirovsky, promises to "charge" both the water and the passport with "healing energy." Around her is a crowd of equally unfortunate and gullible women.

These are very meaningful photographs, if they are projected into the future. They depict the constituency of Zhirinovsky and those like him. The old woman holding a fascist poster in the first photograph may not understand that it is fascist. She probably thinks that she is fighting for independence. In fact, she is fighting for ethnic "purity." The growing nationalism of the republics will inevitably provoke a corresponding wave of Russian nationalism in response. The women in the second photograph have



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been reduced to a despair so great that only a sorcerer, they seem to feel, can relieve it. The frightful state of health care and the unavailability of basic medicines opened the gates wide for charlatanism. Traditional superstitions, beliefs in witch doctors and miracle healers, the explosion of religion and religiosity: everything blended together.

They are waiting, these women, for help from Kashpirovsky. But they need wait no longer: Kashpirovsky was elected to the Parliament on Zhirinovsky's ticket, Zhirinovsky sits in the Parliament and a crowd of yet unknown charlatans has ridden their coattails to power. In *Lenin's Tomb* there is a chapter on Kashpirovsky, a sketch of Zhirinovsky and portraits of the people and the groups that voted for them in December 1993, though the author met them in 1988 to 1990. These people don't know what awaits them. They don't know what their own political views are. Some of them don't even know if they have any views at all. Their feelings are tumultuous; they are in the grip of emotion, shocked by all the new information. And every day brings them more unpleasantness and more humiliation. Remnick's book is filled with their voices.

If a person is told daily that everything is very bad, he may be able to take it; but if it is drummed into him that he himself is bad, that he always was bad and he always will be bad and that this is irremediable, then he will revolt. For years Russian intellectuals have painstakingly explained to "simple people" (at least to those willing to listen) that, in essence, they are historically unreliable. "So what should I do?" said the simple man, depressed. "Well, we don't know," yawned the intellectuals, and left to give lectures abroad. And the intellectuals who didn't go abroad express themselves in such incomprehensible language that they barely understand one another.

Gorbachev was obscure and unintelligible; I have yet to meet anyone capable of paraphrasing even the broad outlines of one of his speeches. Yeltsin is mysterious and vague, he tries the patience of his audience. Gaidar was especially menacing: he promised that everything would be very difficult, and that this was a matter of science. Zhirinovsky, by contrast, appeared clear, precise, smooth, straightforward. To many people, alas, he seemed like a close friend, someone who took the needs of a tormented population to heart.

Zhirinovsky used television adeptly, buying up a great deal of air time—it's not clear who gave him the money—and from the screen he told Russian women, young and old, that he loved, understood and pitied them, and from the same screen he presented them a symbolic gift: roses and candy. Like all cheap gestures, it worked. He told homosexuals that he understood their problems. (Nobody else thought to do this.) He promised drunkards vodka. He made brilliant use of the Russians' traditional fear of the "Asiatic threat," real or invented. He spoke in Turkish to a nebulously defined "Muslim" population and, as he explained to surprised Russian viewers, he ordered them to keep quiet, or else. This must have made a strong impression. Language, after all, is power; and the old Soviet bosses didn't even speak Russian very well. And the democrats who give interviews on CNN, which is broadcast in Moscow, may speak a little English, but they come off badly next to the Westerners, who always seem like the winners anyway.

During the years when Remnick was in the Soviet Union, during those years when the process of unearthing the truth was in full swing and everyone was excited about all the discoveries, the common feeling was that thousands of little truths would come together into one large truth, and that this primary truth would be something convincing, sublime, salutary and that it would set everything to rights and all would be good and just. Many imagined that communism was the main obstacle on the path to this Truth. It was convenient to attribute all problems and all tragedies to communism. After August, however, this naïve view was shaken. One can continue to use the word "communism" as a code word, but it doesn't clarify anything. After seventy-five years of Soviet power, the word "communism" means its opposite. "Communism" means reaction. Our "Communists" are closest in their views to America's extreme conservatives: I love to listen to an ultra-conservative radio program from Lynchburg, Virginia, because it reminds me of the darkest days of my Brezhnev youth. You can't hear anything like it in Russia anymore. The only noticeable difference is the attitude toward private property. Russian Communists don't want to allow private property for a very simple reason: they know that they're not likely to get any. They would like to continue to make use of government property as their own, so they support the idea of government property.

The word "communism" has become a term of abuse, and Zhirinovsky made good use of it. In his campaign he emphasized the fact that all of his rivals had been Communists and that he had never joined the Party. To be sure, his rivals may well have been members of the Party at one time, which doesn't mean anything; but they were not necessarily Communists by conviction. And anyway none of this would prevent Zhirinovsky from joining with them, if he finds it expedient, and forming an absolute majority in the new Russian Parliament.

Well, I think, I'll wake up tomorrow and in Russia there will be yet another psychopathic dictator. But somehow I'm not frightened by this possibility. I should be frightened; but a number of circumstances inspire optimism. For a start, Zhirinovsky is more of a psychopath than even a dictator needs to be. He promised the "complete destruction" of Germany because they didn't give him a visa; he promised to use the Russian navy to blockade Japan's ports if it doesn't sign the peace treaty. Moreover, Russians are lazy, and so far, thank God, not nearly as nationalistic as they are often portrayed. And if Yeltsin fired tanks at one Parliament, why couldn't he do the same with a second, a third or even a fourth? If, of course, he lives that long....

The really important point is that Russia is never what we would like it to be, and none of its inhabitants has ever been happy with it. "Don't worry friends," Mark Zakharov, the director of a Moscow theater, said recently, in an open letter to his compatriots. "Fascism won't fly. In Russia nothing flies. Communism didn't, capitalism didn't and fascism won't." Russia lives some life of its own, a strange, fantastical life where the pitiful and the paltry mix with the great, where paradoxes are the norm and harmony is attainable only in verse, where life breaks through in any form it can—in birches on collapsing balconies, in proletarian Amaretto made from stolen

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alcohol, in Brodsky's almost thirty-year-old poems at three in the morning on a half-dead but immortal island that was built, according to legend, on human bones, by a mad emperor. •

—This article was translated by Jamey Gambrell

The Long Goodbye

By Walter Laqueur

Russia under the Bolshevik Regime by Richard Pipes

(Knopf, 587 pp., $35)

The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991 by Martin Malia

(The Free Press, 400 pp., $24.95)

Shortly after the Russian revolutions of 1917, a British observer stationed in Russia predicted that a judgment on Bolshevism would be possible only after the final curtain had come down. Martin Malia believes that this has finally happened. "Soviet history," he writes, "is at last real history." I am a little less certain. We have not heard the last of 1917. The consequences of 1789, a revolution that lasted a mere four years, dominated French history for a century, until a new equilibrium emerged. The consequences of the Russian revolution are likely to be at least as enduring.

Still, Malia is right that there is no reason to postpone the verdict on Soviet history any longer. These two books are among the most important studies of modern Russian history to have appeared in many years. They are angry books, and they pronounce uncompromising verdicts. They will give rise to controversy. For it has been almost two decades now that the study of contemporary Russian history and Sovietology have been characterized, if not dominated, by the school of thought that came to be called "revisionism." The revisionists resented the label of revisionism. They thought that their views were much more than a retort to cold war doctrine with its prejudiced, anti-Soviet approach, and that they had taken the historiography of the Soviet experiment to a higher level of detachment, objectivity and scholarly quality. Their studies were "scientific," not "folkloristic"; learned, not partisan. Both Malia and Pipes write against revisionism. Indeed, they write against revisionism as if it is still on the rise. In fact, it is in retreat, though slowly and reluctantly, trying to maintain as many of the old positions as possible. (There is still some regret that the cold war did not end in a tie.)

According to the revisionist account, the revolution of October 1917 was a popular, democratic movement that expressed the fundamental interests of the masses of the Russian people. True, the movement was marred from the very beginning by some blemishes such as the banning of all other left-wing parties and the imprisoning or exiling of their leaders. And in later years the essentially liberating character of the Russian revolution was diluted as a result of Russian backwardness, of civil war, of the hostility of the West, of the excesses of Stalinism, among other unfortunate influences. Still, despite certain economic difficulties and certain gross violations of human rights, it was argued that Soviet society after Stalin was steadily improving in most respects, moving toward a civil society, a new and brilliant dawn, a return to pristine Leninism or Bukharinism or some other version of true socialism. The arrival of democracy was only a matter of time. There were some Sovietologists who thought that perestroika had taken place even before Gorbachev came to power; they spoke of "welfare authoritarianism" in Russia, about a "self-stabilizing oligarchy," about the "devolution of power" and other wonderful developments.

The breakup of the Soviet system came as a great surprise to everyone. But it was particularly painful for the revisionists, for reasons that are rather obvious. Since glasnost it has become ex-

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ceedingly difficult to find anybody in Russia who has a good word to say about the Russian revolution and its aftermath, except some diehards who now argue that the revolution was basically sound but the presence of so many non-Russians spoiled it. In Moscow everyone speaks of the old regime as totalitarian, a term that had been anathema to revisionists in the West. While Russian scholars were showing that the cost in human lives of the Soviet experiment was truly staggering, their Western counterparts from Australia to California were proving to their own satisfaction that the terror, while regrettable, was much narrower in its impact than Solzhenitsyn, Conquest and the other cold warriors said. American revisionists continue to assert that the cold war was largely America's fault and might have been avoided, but Russian experts are taking a much less categorical view. Richard Pipes's *History of the Russian Revolution*, which was harshly attacked in American professional journals, has been published in Russia, as have Malia's essays, but Russian interest in Western revisionist literature is virtually nonexistent.

These anomalies provide the background for a proper understanding of these two books and their likely reception in the American academy. Pipes and Malia believe that the Bolshevik seizure of power had the direst consequences, that it was an unmitigated disaster for Russia and for mankind. There are differences, of course, in the scope of these books, and in the views of their authors. Pipes's new volume on the Russian revolution ends with Lenin's death in 1924; Malia's work spans the whole Soviet era. Malia believes that it was not Mother Russia (that is, Russian backwardness) that perverted the "noble and pure idea" of socialism, but the other way around. He says that at long last the awful truth must now be faced, and it is that socialism was the source of all evil, that it was bound to lead to totalitarianism. Pipes, on the other hand, points to the destructive influence of the Russian patrimony on the Socialist era. Nowhere in the West, he observes, did Marxism have such negative consequences.

In their final judgment of the seven Soviet decades, however, Pipes and Malia concur. It was a profound tragedy. And yet, all their negative comments on Russia's past notwithstanding, they are hopeful about the future. Malia writes that the "furies unleashed in 1914" have now been "finally appeased." It is a commendable sentiment, but it is, I think, premature. Pipes has elsewhere expressed his belief that Russia will follow the road of Germany after 1945, that it will move toward prosperity and democracy. How to explain this optimism? For many years there was little, if anything, inspiring to report about the Soviet Union, and it is understandable that inveterate critics of the Soviet system, who still find a great deal to admire in Russia's past and culture, should now welcome Boris Yeltsin and overrate the prospects of his reformist policies. But Yeltsin and his ever-changing crew have made momentous mistakes. And even if they had not made those mistakes, and Russia were now run by steadfast democrats and real statesmen, could these post-Soviet heroes succeed without strong popular support?

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Pipes's book concentrates on the period of the civil war and the New Economic Policy. He adduces a number of reasons why Bolshevism prevailed in the civil war, above all the fact that the Communists were united while their enemies were not:

> The victory of the Red Army was a foregone conclusion, given its immense superiority in manpower and war materiel, and the advantages of its geopolitical situation. The relative weakness of the Whites was compounded by their inability to grasp the exigencies of civil war and their stubborn refusal to acknowledge the separation of the non-Russian regions. Strategic mistakes were committed ... but it is doubtful that more intelligent politics or better strategic planning would have averted defeat.... The "objective" elements were too unfavorable for the Whites.

Pipes further notes the "weakly developed sense of patriotism among the Russian population," hence the difficulty of appealing to the people "to liberate Russia." "The Bolshevik exhortations to looting, desertion and separatism attracted them far more."

Some of this is right, some goes too far, some is irrelevant. The victory of the Bolsheviks was not foreordained. It is true that they could maneuver with greater ease because they enjoyed logistical advantages; but the same advantage did not help the Republicans in the Spanish civil war. The fact that the Whites did not acknowledge the separation of the non-Russian regions was indeed a mistake, but it had no major consequences on the outcome of the civil war: the Whites did not try to reconquer those areas, nor did the Finns or the Poles help the Red Army. The Reds succeeded in enlisting a surprising number of the officers of the old Tsarist army, but the level of competence of the Red Army leadership was not impressive, as Pipes observes elsewhere. In brief, the "objective conditions" were unfavorable for both sides. As the Menshevik leader Martov said, the masses were "indifferent and passive." In these circumstances the side that could muster more enthusi-

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asm (or fanaticism) prevailed. To this day it has not been fully explained why the Reds had the edge in motivation.

Malia's book does not shed much light on this puzzling question; he devotes altogether two pages to the civil war. But he takes a position very different from Pipes's: "The Bolshevik victory was by no means foreordained." On three occasions he believes the Soviet regime was in mortal danger (when St. Petersburg was attacked, when Admiral Kolchak advanced from Siberia to the West and when the White Army attacked from the south). And while 6 million were conscripted into the Red Army, some 3 million disappeared or deserted. Nonetheless, Malia attributes the eventual success of the Bolsheviks to a "superior capacity for organization." This could well be, but where had they acquired it? By sheer intuition, or in the coffeehouses of Vienna and Zurich?

The quarrel that these books make with revisionist history is a worthy quarrel, and though it is not a new quarrel, they deserve to be praised for it. The Soviet experiment, as it was called in the early years, *was* a tragedy. Pipes is absolutely right to insist that there is no virtue, moral or methodological, in viewing such an unprecedented calamity (as many revisionists have viewed it, following E. H. Carr) with dispassion and neutrality. And yet something goes wrong. Like long-distance runners still running after the race is over, Pipes and Malia continue their criticism relentlessly. They do not know where to stop.

Malia's broadside against Bolshevism turns into a wholesale attack on socialism in all its forms. As he sees it, it was socialism that led inexorably to the totalitarian monstrosities: "If we look closely to what basic socialism means, the obvious answer to the false paradox of good ends and bad results is that the Soviet experiment turned totalitarian not despite its being Socialist but because it was Socialist." Thus the poor, ineffectual Second International is made responsible for Stalin. This approach involves Malia in various difficulties. He claims that there is no such thing as socialism and claims in the same breath that it is the main key to an understanding of the totalitarian system: "In short, there is no such thing as socialism, and the Soviet Union has built it." This is not only a paradox; it is also a contradiction.

Malia puts most of the blame for the Soviet tragedy on Communist egalitarianism; but surely egalitarianism does not figure high on the list of communism's sins. Equality was never one of the main tenets of its theory and it was certainly alien to its practice, as the lifestyle of the *nomenklatura* proves. Malia also errs occasionally about details. "C'est la lutte finale" is not the first line of *L'Internationale*; the impact of Andrei Sakharov inside Russia was infinitely greater than that of Alexander Zinoviev, whom Malia seems to prefer. (Zinoviev is a gadfly, not a serious thinker; his claims of yesteryear that Russia would always remain Stalinist were as perverse then as his anti-American vituperation is now.)

In 1991, Malia writes, the Communist Party was destroyed and a superpower dismembered, socialism was renounced and capitalism restored. In his view, the most enduring fantasy of the twentieth century, the pseudoreligion-cum-pseudoscience of Marxism-Leninism, simply evaporated. And he adds that none of these things could have occurred as a gradual process. Marxism-Leninism, to be sure, did vanish in the former Soviet Union. But can it really be argued that capitalism has been restored in Russia (let alone in Ukraine and Belarus), what with all the old *nomenklatura* in place? It is premature even to talk about the destruction of the Communist Party. And can one be quite so sure that a gradual process was impossible? Such a process seems unlikely, but as long as we do not know the outcome of developments in China, there can be no final verdict.

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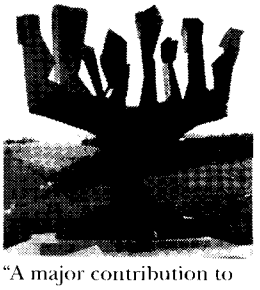

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Having relegated socialism to the lower depths of hell, Malia's resolve weakens toward the end and suddenly he mellows. Yes, he says, utopias are dangerous, but they are also necessary: "The overstatements of visionary socialism were necessary to produce the welfare state." Yes, the lion of "capitalism" and the unicorn of "socialism" will continue to contend inconclusively until the end of modernity. Much ballast will have to be jettisoned if the Socialist aspiration is to survive. And so on. Social democrats may agree with such sentiments. But Friedrich von Hayek, who is quoted with evident approval by Malia, would have taken a dim view of such a weakening of the will.

"Utopia," more narrowly defined, plays a central role also in the conclusion of Pipes's book. The central notion of his thinking is expressed in a paraphrase of a comment by Hippolyte Taine on the French revolution: precisely because modern society is so vast and so complicated, and therefore so difficult to grasp, it is neither proper nor feasible to impose on it patterns of conduct, let alone to remake it. What cannot be comprehended cannot be controlled. There is truth in this argument. Marx's actionism, his all-too-famous appeal to change the world rather than interpret it, was, in retrospect, not such a good idea.

Still, such categorical injunctions against tampering with the social and political order are, finally, not feasible. If it were really true that what cannot be comprehended cannot be controlled, much of modern medicine would have to go out of business. For while the effects of many drugs are, broadly speaking, known, the way they act upon us is often subject to surmise. There is a considerable gray zone in the real world. Human affairs are neither fully transparent nor entirely opaque. Often decisions have to be taken without certainty about the consequences.

Although Pipes says in his introduction that his work concludes with the death of Lenin in 1924, he carries the narrative well beyond that date. His main purpose is to inquire into the influence of Bolshevism on fascism and National Socialism, and to puncture another revisionist myth. There can be no doubt that there was such an influence, though the revisionist school of historians has labored hard to prove that similarities between the Communist regimes and the fascist regimes were accidental or inconsequential. This is simply not true. It was no coincidence that both these revolutionary systems were characterized by a one-party, one-leader, one-doctrine structure, and by the intensive use of terror and propaganda. European revisionists have virtually succeeded in banishing "National Socialism" or "Nazism" from the professional dictionary; the politically correct term is now "fascism." This helps to obliterate the important differences between Italy and Germany, and it obscures the populist, anti-capitalist inspiration of Nazism. "Fascism," in the construction of the revisionists, is the creature of big business. The political purpose of this construction is obvious, but the evidence for it does not exist.

Pipes makes these and other useful points, but he tends to overshoot the target. We all know that Mussolini was once a revolutionary Socialist, and that he made some favorable comments about Lenin in the early 1920s; but it is an exaggeration to say that Mussolini "never concealed his sympathy and admiration for communism." After he came to power he was no longer interested in the subject, and the Communists ended up in the Lipari Islands.

Affinities between Berlin and Moscow did exist, but they were not all important. It is true that the Nazis, for all their feverish propaganda slogans, did not regard the Communists as a mortal threat to the German nation; but it is not true that relations between the two parties were "friendly." On a few occasions, some of them in wartime, Hitler expressed a grudging admiration for Stalin, which he never did for Churchill or Roosevelt; but Pipes makes too much of such asides. One of Pipes's main sources for Hitler's "learning a great deal from Marxism" is Hermann Rauschning, a former Nazi leader; but Rauschning's testimony, however entertaining and stimulating, is now read by most German experts with great reservations because its authenticity is not above suspicion.

It is also true that Stalin relied more on terror than did Hitler and Mussolini, but the difference was not overwhelming, and it is an overstatement to claim that "whereas the Bolshevik leaders relied almost exclusively on coercion, Mussolini and even Hitler followed Pareto's advice to combine coercion with consent." For at one time there was genuine enthusiasm for communism among young people in the cities, and not everyone was applauding Stalin merely because there was a man with a gun standing behind him.

Did Hitler and Mussolini really "learn a great deal from Bolshevik techniques"? They were in no need of an inspiration from abroad, and they made no effort at all to learn. They understood the appeal of nationalism well before Stalin did. True, being a native of the Caucasus, Stalin understood nationalism a little better than other Communist leaders, and he wrote a long essay about it early in his career. But like all other Marxists (and liberals and nearly everyone else), he still thought that with a little pressure

August 1945

Sweating and greasy in the dove-cote where one of them lived
four young men drank "buzzy" from canteen cups, the drink
made from warm beer mixed half and half with colorless Italian
distilled alcohol. A strange fierce taste like bees in the mouth.
Their faces gleamed in the light of a single candle. They were
getting drunk, deliberately, for this was the only answer. They
sang songs of joy, they sang "Lili Marlene," they were silent,
they broke into sobbing. They spoke of home, thousands
of miles away, of the years of filth and fear and loneliness,
of war and war's ending, of the new bomb that had killed
hundreds of thousands at one blow in Japan. There near
Manfredonia on the Adriatic coast, across from Ithaka where
Odysseus the Wise had once come home from war, in the huge
disordered repple-depple where throngs of men had waited,
milling and shuffling, shuffling and milling, for shipment
to the war in Asia, these four were delirious, dumbfounded.
Gratefully they slipped away, falling into the discontinuity
and incoherence of drunkenness. In a tiny room perched high
on a wall over a courtyard, over a dark field where fires burned
and cries resounded, the night so hot, the air so evil-smelling,
candlelight flickered on the slack faces of four young men,
ravaged and stuporous, who knew that time had stopped
and started again.

HAYDEN CARRUTH

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from above nationalism would become less and less important and ultimately vanish altogether.

Pipes concludes that "the Jewish Holocaust thus turned out to be one of the many unanticipated and unintended consequences of the Russian revolution." This is true, but only in the sense that all history is a seamless web. In this light, Kerensky, and Tsar Nikolai II, too, are partly responsible for the Bolshevik takeover, and thus partly responsible also for the Holocaust. Pipes does not quite endorse the views of the German nationalist school of historiography inspired by Ernst Nolte, according to which Hitler learned what he knew about mass murder from the Gulag; but some of Pipes's statements come oddly close.

Pipes makes the perfectly valid point that while communism derived its inspiration from the Enlightenment, fascism is rooted in the Counter-Enlightenment. And he points out that in practice the distinction was blurred. So far so good. But he then continues putting the blame for communism's failure on "the Enlightenment's most pernicious idea," that man was merely a material being, devoid of soul or innate ideas. This is a misreading of the eighteenth-century philosophers; La Mettrie did espouse such a die-hard materialism, but Locke and Hume, Kant and the French Encyclopedists, did not. More important, such intellectual genealogies are unconvincing. Nietzsche has been made responsible for Eichmann, and Mazzini for Mussolini; but this does not really help us to understand Eichmann and Mussolini. Voltaire as the spiritual godfather of Stalin does not make much sense either.

Humanly, the reactions of Pipes and Malia are not difficult to understand. The misleading literature about communism and the Soviet Union that proliferated during the last quarter of a century is enough to try the patience of saints. The anger and the impatience of these two anti-revisionists have a basis in academic reality. But academic reality frequently lags behind the rest of reality; and one wishes that these distinguished books, which should be read by everyone interested in this subject, were more measured. They are powerful antidotes to an egregious tradition of historiography, but they could have been more than antidotes. They could have cast light on the debates of the future, not only on the debates of the past.

WALTER LAQUEUR is the author most recently of *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (HarperCollins).

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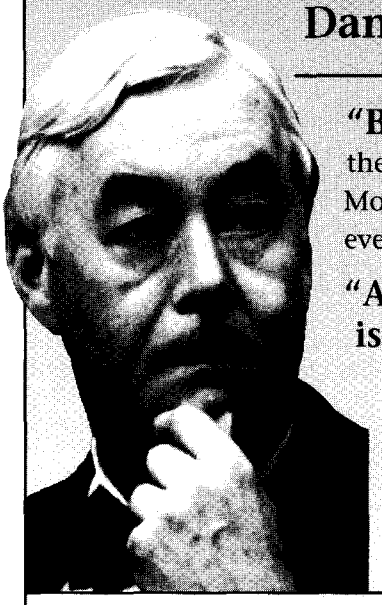

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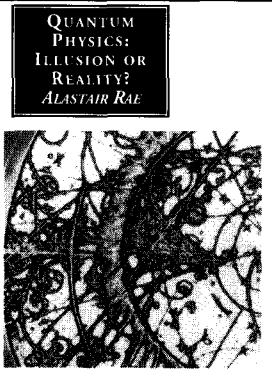

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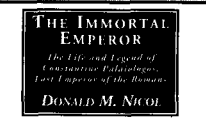

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Dream Factory

By Sven Birkerts

Butterfly Stories: A Novel by William T. Vollmann

(Grove/Atlantic, 280 pp., $21)

William Vollmann is the kind of writer who sets other writers to calculating—totting up published pages and dividing by the guesswork figure of years spent at the desk. My math, which takes into account six novels (including the one under review and his most recent book, *The Rifles*), two story collections and a travelogue/documentary, tells me that over a ten-year period Vollmann will have brought into print some 5,000 pages of prose: a Balzacian rate of production. The fingertips prickle at the thought of so much typing (or processing). And the reader, no longer buying the idea that he should be grateful for any and all artistic bounty, rebels. He wants to hear that much of the work is just that—typing—and can safely be disregarded.

So far as I have read, and so far as I can judge, it cannot. Though he is prolific in the extreme, there is little contaminating sense of haste in the prose. Vollmann is an attentive architect of sentences and paragraphs, and even the longest of his books, *Fathers and Crows* (the second part of his projected seven-part novelized history of North America), which runs to nearly 1,000 pages with appendices, reflects in its rhythms and diction a quick ear and a finely-honed sense of particulars. The prose is sometimes excessive, and suffers from imbalance (too many repetitions, too much data); but Vollmann cannot be written off. He is a peculiarly possessed talent, a computer-using descendant of the tribe of exalted scribblers, very likely living with his fingers on the keyboard not because he wants to be famous or rewarded, but because he feels the pressure—now specific, now maddeningly inchoate—of some vast inspiration.

Except he doesn't just live with his fingers on the keyboard. His obsessions—with the historical collision of cultures as well as with contemporary denizens of subcultures, with whores and street people and skinheads—have led him, globally, to Afghanistan, Sarajevo and the Arctic wilderness; and more locally into the dark hives of San Francisco's Tenderloin district. Moreover, to judge from references incorporated throughout the work, he has devoured libraries of books, on everything from Icelandic sagas to recondite military procedures. Reading over the capsule biographies on Vollmann's various books we get the feeling that there may also be a bit of myth-making going on.

The Vollmann oeuvre embraces what appear to be two distinct projects, one of them the Seven Dreams series, of which Vollmann has published *The Ice Shirt*, *Fathers and Crows* and now *The Rifles*. These are large-scale, deeply researched and energetically executed panels from North American history. They reflect, respectively, the tenth-century encounter of the Norse explorers and the indigenous Indian populations; the seventeenth-century Jesuit missions in Canada; and the early nineteenth-century search by traders for the Northwest passage. The works are episodic, in places collagelike, and they are busy with idiosyncratic intrusions—Vollmann's elaborate, hand-drawn title pages, his illustrations and manifold glossaries and appendices, his sudden injection of present-day observations. We have no doubt but that this is a writer on a mission, a world revisionist, a figure who would be easier to slot as a crank if he were not still in his mid-30s.

Interspersed among the historical sagas are Vollmann's books of short fiction, which include *The Rainbow Stories* and *Thirteen Stories, Thirteen Epitaphs*, and his novel *Whores for Gloria*. All are portraits of life in extremis. Vollmann is not interested in bridging the gap between society and its excluded members. He is not leading readers to the reassuring recognition that these are, deep down, people just like us, or even "There but for the grace of God go I..." Rather, he brazenly pushes their otherness in our faces. As if to say, "Look at these people, these whores and drifters and dying war veterans. You cannot begin to imagine what they do in their day or how the world looks through their eyes." Roughly, unevenly and with a sometimes punkishly deliberate bad taste—glorying a bit in his self-appointed messenger status—Vollmann tries to pry his way in past the reader's armor, to thwart the easy empathic reflex. He would have us recognize that there are things in this world that cannot be assimilated to our concern, that sometimes anarchy and perversity just *are*. Reading these stories, we feel that the lower depths may be stranger and more disturbingly various than we had allowed.

Butterfly Stories: A Novel is something new for the author. He has used the composition-by-panel procedure to forge a work that, as the title suggests, hovers between genres. In eight chapters—some only a few pages long, one comprising 137 numbered sections—he relates the story of a man known first, in childhood, as "the butterfly boy" (presumably because of his delicacy), then as "the journalist" and finally as "the husband." The book is, in many ways, the working through of a somewhat rudimentary premise, one sketched out in the course of a recent interview, in which Vollmann remarks: "The little kids on the playground who are picked on by the bullies don't grow up being saints as a result of having been martyrs early." Vollmann nowhere indicates that this *is* his premise, but since the novel's first section, "The Butterfly Boy," presents the protagonist as the hapless victim of a schoolyard tormentor, we feel justified in taking the comment as a cue.

Vollmann's playground is a kind of primeval laboratory. The butterfly boy is sensitive, bereft of the necessary social defenses—he faces the world with a wide-open innocence and violates the laws of school-boy society by liking little girls. The bully, possibly retarded, is a volatile chunk of menace. "The substance that his soul was composed of was pain. Since the most basic pleasure of substance is to see or dream or replicate itself, the bully fulfilled himself by causing pain in others." But one day the butterfly boy, his main victim, is saved from the customary tortures by the intercession of an older girl—she trounces the bully decisively. Thereupon the other kids gather around and force the boy to kiss his rescuer:

> He kissed her the only way he knew how, as he would have kissed his mother's cheek or his aunt's cheek or the cheek of any of the nice ladies who came to visit. (The other boys made loud noises of revulsion.) He felt something happening to her but he did not understand what it was. He said: I love you.
>
> Then she was squeezing him back in tight defiance:—I love you, too, she said.

A few minutes later, when they are alone, the girl asks: "Are we going to get married?" Vollmann writes: "This eventuality had not occurred to the butterfly boy

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before, but now that she had said it, it became the only conceivable choice. He nodded."

Here, in emblematic miniature (also in purer form), is the whole of the novel—its brutal backdrop, its unexpected emotional rescue and its naïve tenderness. At the same time the scene is presented as a first cause: this is the root of violence and grace from which will grow the twisted stalk, the obsession that will finally claim the butterfly boy. The psychological stepping stones are oddly placed, however, and we are forced to make some wild guesses about the development of the boy's character. In the next section, where he is called "the boy who wanted to be a journalist," we see him first flirting with suicide—half-hearted cuts on the wrist—then traveling by train through Eastern Europe with a lesbian he claims to love.

We extend good faith and ride along, but it is not until the next section, titled "More Benadryl, Whined the Journalist," that the narrative settles into coherence. This longest of the novel's chapters opens on a less than lyrical note:

> Once upon a time a journalist and a photographer set out to whore their way across Asia. They got a New York magazine to pay for it. They each armed themselves with a tube of cool, soft K-Y jelly and a box of Trojans.

It seems that Vollmann is trying to see just how far he can *épater* the P.C.-niks. Is this to be some kind of anti-legend for the Age of AIDS—two grown men roaring goggle-eyed through the fleshpots of Thailand and Cambodia, probing both the extent of their lust and the depth of their cynicism?

At first it seems so. The two start their pilgrimage at a Bangkok bar called "The Soy Cowboy," where they pick partners from a group of Cambodian girls with names like Oy and Toy. The sexual descriptions are stark, and we brace ourselves for what promises to be an ever more sordid series of encounters. But then there is a catch in the momentum. The journalist believes that he has injured his girl; he is suddenly overcome with remorse and self-loathing. And we recall—for we had forgotten—that this is the butterfly boy grown up. Vulnerability like his does not get burned away by hard times and hard knocks. We now accept that he gives the girl a large sum extra so that she can see a doctor, and that he tells himself that he deserves to get AIDS. Nor are we surprised when, soon after, he begins to experience strange pains and swellings in his groin. Only the photographer, his crude foil, will reject this drama of sin and penance. When the journalist wonders about the morality of their undertaking, the other cuts him

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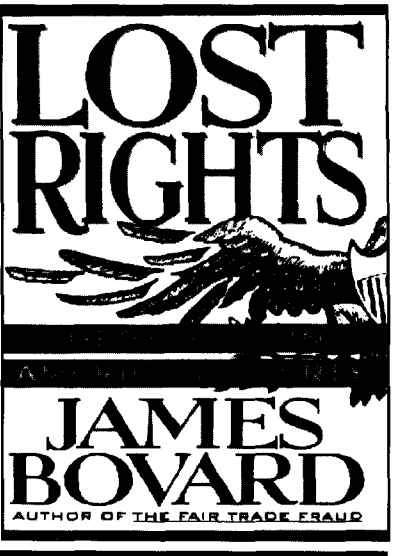

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short. "We're giving them money, aren't we?"

The narrative jerks forward in abbreviated chunks, almost like a length of film being hand-pulled through an editing machine. More days and nights in The Soy Cowboy, some anxiety-inducing flashes: "A girl in a blindingly-white T-shirt came in, and then another. They leaned on the bar on that hot afternoon, talking, while the spots of disco-light began to move and the fan bulged round and round like a roving eye." Vollmann saturates us with atmospheres, rancid and rancorous, until we are pulled into place, suffering moods along with the journalist, staring jadedly at the photographer and his girl in the next bed. From his perceptions alone we start to understand that our protagonist is a man enduring considerable torment. "Whatever path he chose," writes Vollmann, "he was lonely for other paths." He is like Kierkegaard's seducer, an individual caught up in the joyless rotation of sensation, who is in despair without himself quite knowing it.

But he will—and this is Vollmann's unusual gambit—end up as a man who breaks free of the circuit, who by way of improbable circumstance (or should we call it destiny?) advances to the philosopher's ethical stage, the mark of which is the willingness to commit the self. The improbability: that journalist and photographer travel to Cambodia, where, out of the blue, and with little seeming reason, the journalist falls in love with a whore named Vanna. There are no fireworks. We witness another routine transaction, a gestural fumbling outside the reach of language. But somewhere in the midst of it all, the man discovers an attachment:

> She almost never smiled. Once again that night she traced an invisible bracelet around her wrist, then his. He watched her sleeping. In the middle of the night he pulled her on top of him just to hug her more tightly, and she seemed no heavier than the blanket.

Clearly need and loneliness are what awaken his heart. But for the lover it is the effect, and not the cause, that matters. Soon after their first night together the journalist takes Vanna to the jewelry market and buys her a gold bracelet. This, according to local lore, binds them in something very much like marriage.

The two lovers spend several days together, communicating by way of a man called "the English teacher" (who massacres the language more than he ministers to it), enjoying a blithe simplicity: "Her hand and face were amazed at the ice cube tray in the freezer, he knocked a cube out for her and she crunched it happily between her teeth. She was finally laughing and smiling and going *pssst*!..."

But then the travelers have to return to Thailand. The journalist is genuinely heartsick to leave Vanna, and the feeling grows rather than diminishes. He tries the Bangkok whores again but the contact only intensifies his sense of loss. Worse, his pains and swellings return; he knows that his body is turning on him. One rainy night, shortly before they are to fly back to the States, he tries to kill himself: "The dirty walls, splattered with the blood of squashed bugs, seemed his own walls, his soul's skin and prison. How could he set his butterfly free? Then he remembered the Benadryl, and smiled."

But the end will not come so easily. The journalist is found, saved and put on the plane home: he is ready to begin the most urgent, and final, leg of his journey. Back in America, the journalist—now called "the husband" because he has pledged his troth to Vanna—moves around in a state of active despair. Feeling that his health is breaking down, he gets himself examined. Meanwhile, his American marriage, which we learn about with a certain surprise, collapses completely. Letters of inquiry to Cambodia come back with the same unvarying message: Vanna's whereabouts are unknown. The husband is sure that she has been picked up by the Khmer Rouge; he fears for her life. Then comes the final blow. His test results confirm that he is HIV positive, that his days are numbered.

The husband makes a last frantic bid to get back to Asia. And then, without much transition, he is there, approaching the checkpoints at the Cambodian border—a dying man heading into the land of death. With his head full of terrifying hallucinations, he sneaks past the guards, almost making it to safety before the hands of his captors close around him. The novel ends as he is being led toward a cage. It is given to him to behold a luminous apparition of his beloved:

> She was looking on him full at last with that sweet soft pale smooth delicate face of hers, open and trusting, smiling—really smiling!—a pouty little smile like a kiss, her gold chain necklace coming shooting out of chin-shadow with the heart lying on her thin bluish-white blouse just above her breasts, inverted-V eyebrows seeming to question him a little as she smiled: the recognition of him took up her whole face as she sat waiting for him with that sad smile; he was hers; soon he'd be sleeping beside her forever.

Vollmann has thrown down a truly daunting set of hurdles. There are so many grounds on which *Butterfly Stories* invites dismissal—the schematic and somewhat hackneyed psychological premise (the self-alienated protagonist finding redemption through immersion in the "other"), the deep improbability of his awakening to love in the arms of a young Cambodian prostitute, not to mention the starkly graphic and conventionally debasing sexual descriptions, which almost feel calculated to offend. It is as if Vollmann, out of cynicism or perversity, or in the way of certain new-wave cartoonists who draw with deliberate ungainliness, had decided to push against the grain of the aesthetic; and not as a humble rejection of refinements, but rather out of a supreme confidence that his material was so urgent and authentic that it would survive anyway.

Whether or not this was Vollmann's impulse doesn't finally matter that much. What matters is that he has, to a significant degree, succeeded. He has smelted from his most unlikely materials a small but potentially glowing bit of radium. He has—and this is no mean feat—put us in touch with a soul, a credible entity that does not feel placed on the page but rather seems to emerge from it. Our more cautious literary sense denies this possibility, but sense be damned, there it is.

Vollmann's narrative may clatter in fits and starts over the sprockets, but the language itself is charged and weaves a spell. It not only delineates the character of the journalist, but inveigles us into an intimacy. At times staccato, at other times uncoiling into dreamy lyricism, the prose gives a convincing rendition of exacerbated inwardness:

> You can notch the fish's fin, harden the removed bit of tissue with epoxy, and then slice it with a diamond saw, slice it thin for the microscope. Now turn the brass knob on the stem, your eye gazing passionlessly into that other world that used to be a fish; when it comes into focus you'll see the fish's age straightaway; it's just like counting tree-rings; it's no different than half-listening to the interpreter explaining the difference between Soviet pistols ... while gazing out the car window at the houses on stilts over the squishy river, houses connected by gangplanks; you can see the people inside looking out; there is no privacy. That's how it must be for those mercilessly illuminated fish-cells. When he was 6 or 7 his parents told him that he was a big boy, but he got sick and then he was little; they wouldn't use the oral thermometer. They made him pull down his pants on the bed and then the anal thermometer went in, cool and greasy. The whole world saw. He lay still. When they pulled it out and told him that he could move, he continued to lie there with his face in the pillow. He'd gone out of himself; the worst thing now would be if anyone saw him coming back into himself; then that would prove that this thing had happened. But you do it; you look, see, stare, observe, count, measure and categorize. You have to do it! You suck

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into your eyes the naked children squatting in the mud, coffee-colored puddles in the muddy road, grass-roofed wooden booths in the mud. You match the numbers, my dear technicians. HIV ANTIBODIES PRESENT.

Usually we are counseled to trust the tale, not the teller. Here it is the reverse. The tale strains credulity, but the teller, in setting down the journalist's perceptions, his associations, his often underdefended feelings, makes him distressingly known to us. The journalist is a boy-man, really, a case of arrested development, and under the often sordid surface narrative we hear his voice. In time it overtakes us, convinces us—as does any worthy fictional creation—that within the confines of the book his truth is absolute. The oddness of the plot feels oddly beside the point, as do some of the sequences we follow in our dreams. And indeed, the strange electricity of dreams flickers through these pages, inducing, when we finish, some of the disorientation that sudden awakenings can bring.

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Objects of Desire

BY E.V. THAW

Collecting: An Unruly Passion Psychological Perspectives by Werner Muensterberger

(Princeton Unviersity Press, 295 pp., $24.95)

How I looked forward to reading this book. I am a collector, Dr. Muensterberger, I confess it. But how disappointed I was to learn that my vocation was simply, or not so simply, the outcome of an unloved childhood and/or poor toilet training as an infant. Werner Muensterberger, a well-known psychoanalyst and collector of African tribal art, backs away from the "anal retentive" cliché at the close of his argument, but not because he has grasped the intellectual bankruptcy of such Freudian conclusions.

This strange and unsatisfactory book made me realize that the literature on the subject of collecting is nearly nonexistent. There are a few memoirs like Louisine Havemayer's *Sixteen to Sixty: Memoirs of a Collector.* There are biographies and autobiographies of figures in history who were famous for other reasons than collecting alone. One thinks of Lorenzo de Medici, Charles I, Richelieu, Jefferson, Ruskin, Gertrude Stein, any of the Rothschilds and J. P. Morgan. It is sad to think that, if Muensterberger is correct, they all must have been unloved as children. It is also sad to think that all could have been cured of their obsession by the right therapy, or at least relieved by the doctors of the money required to indulge the obsession. (During my salad days as a young art dealer in New York in the 1950s and '60s, I hosted wealthy psychoanalysts in my gallery almost daily. They were looking for de Koonings and Pollocks, and carrying paper bags full of cash. I suppose, with today's rapidly eroding "cachet" for all things Freudian, that these analyst-collectors must be comforted by the value of their art collections.)

There is an obvious appeal to a theory like the one that this book espouses. Once drummed into your head with the few examples that it cites, the theory can be retro-fitted to anyone in history, even if we do not have a clue about their real childhoods. One of Muensterberger's examples, spun out in detailed speculation, is Jean Duc de Berri, whose loneliness is inferred from the fact that, as a great nobleman in France in the fourteenth century, he believed in holy relics and moved about between his many residences. I would have thought that after Meyer Schapiro's famous essay debunking Freud's psychobiography of Leonardo da Vinci, his devoted followers would be more reluctant to psychoanalyze long-dead figures about whose personal lives rather little is known. Alas, the contrary seems to be true, and historical psychobabble is still rampant.

Another of Muensterberger's examples of an unhappy childhood is Balzac. Balzac's obsession with using second-rate bric-a-brac to decorate an ostentatious and apparently unaffordable townhouse in Paris does not qualify him, in my eyes, as a collector; indeed, it disqualifies him. The figure adduced by Muensterberger as his paradigmatic collector is Sir Thomas Phillipps, a nineteenth-century eccentric who was more than slightly mad. Phillipps, whose rich father clearly indulged him beyond the call of duty, destroyed the happiness and the equilibrium of everyone around him in order to accumulate the books and the manuscripts with which he filled his residences to messy overflowing. Often he did not even open the packages. When he died, there began a series of legendary book auctions of his vast and miscellaneous holdings, which became a source for many of today's major libraries. But I would insist that Phillipps, too, was not truly a collector.

What is the defining characteristic of that human subspecies, the "collector"? At least Muensterberger's book inspires one to ask the question. While I recognize that people collect many different kinds of things, some trivial and some serious, I mean aesthetically or culturally, certain characteristics seem to me to be common to all versions of the activity. First, one chooses a category of objects, of things toward which one is inclined by a preference of taste or by the possession of special knowledge. Then the collector proceeds to acquire examples, but he must acquire them according to a plan. Sheer accumulation is not true collecting; the activity must be driven by the desire to impose a kind of order on the material at hand.

Collecting, in short, is an intellectual activity in the course of which one makes deliberate choices. It is far from the hysterical clinging to fuzzy animal toys by a love-starved child that Muensterberger and his analyst authorities would have us believe it is. But collecting is not only a matter of imposing order on groups of related things. It is also an attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of them. It is not simply an exercise of certain faculties of discrimination that we all possess, but that the "collector" possesses more intensely; it is also a cerebral, analytical experience.

This is not to deny that there is an emotional or obsessional or manic element in some bouts of collecting, especially when competition is keen and the amounts of money at stake are large. But the picture that Muensterberger paints, of a greedy, panting, sweating, drooling bidder at Sotheby's on some kind of an artificial "high" as his lot is knocked down to him by the auctioneer—this picture is a one-sided distortion. Such a collector is the exception, I believe, rather than the rule. The collectors I have known over a long career, if they were at all knowledgeable, bid with careful deliberation and with fixed limits very much in mind, since they, above others, knew the value of the object.

I am thinking about collectors of art and other related objects such as rare books or autograph manuscripts. I cannot

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talk from experience about collectors of bottle-tops, matchbook covers, baseball cards or comic books, though I suspect that, as with stamps and coins, some of the same rules apply. Condition is an important factor, as is scarcity, and certain images or designs will have an appeal because of their subject and their superior aesthetic quality. But in all varieties of collecting there is likely to be a special camaraderie among practitioners. There will be fraternities of like-minded men and women who help each other, form deep friendships, conduct correspondence, publish scholarly journals on their subjects and often end up devoting the carefully sifted and orderly results to a philanthropic purpose. Our great libraries and museums are a witness to the prevalence of this kind of serious collecting.

The melodramatic version of the secretive accumulator, slavering over the possessions that he allows no one else to see, is mostly a fictional stereotype since, if one is talking about pleasurable "highs," showing one's collection to another who equally understands the material must rank right up there among the greatest joys of life.

Success in the collecting of art, no matter how logical one's mind, depends on having a good "eye." That seems to be an innate characteristic, like having an ear for music. It is no mystery, therefore, why a few extremely rich men collect paintings and drawings and sculpture, while the vast majority of the very rich do not collect those things, but prefer horses, yachts or other conspicuous diversions. Along with a good "eye," I believe there is an auxiliary factor: the presence in the collector's life of an adviser or guru, who exerts a strong influence on the individual collector or sometimes on a whole cultural milieu. One must think of Bernard Berenson when discussing the great Isabella Gardner Collection in Boston, and Georg Swarzenski together with Robert von Hirsch when discussing Frankfurt in the 1920s, where medieval Christian objects were popular with the local Jewish collectors. In Berlin at the end of the nineteenth century, Wilhelm von Bode cast a mighty spell on the taste for Italian Old Master Paintings and bronzes, while Hugo von Tschudi, Julius Meier-Graefe and the artist Max Lieberman, in various Germain centers, prepared the way for the understanding of impressionism, Van Gogh and Cézanne.

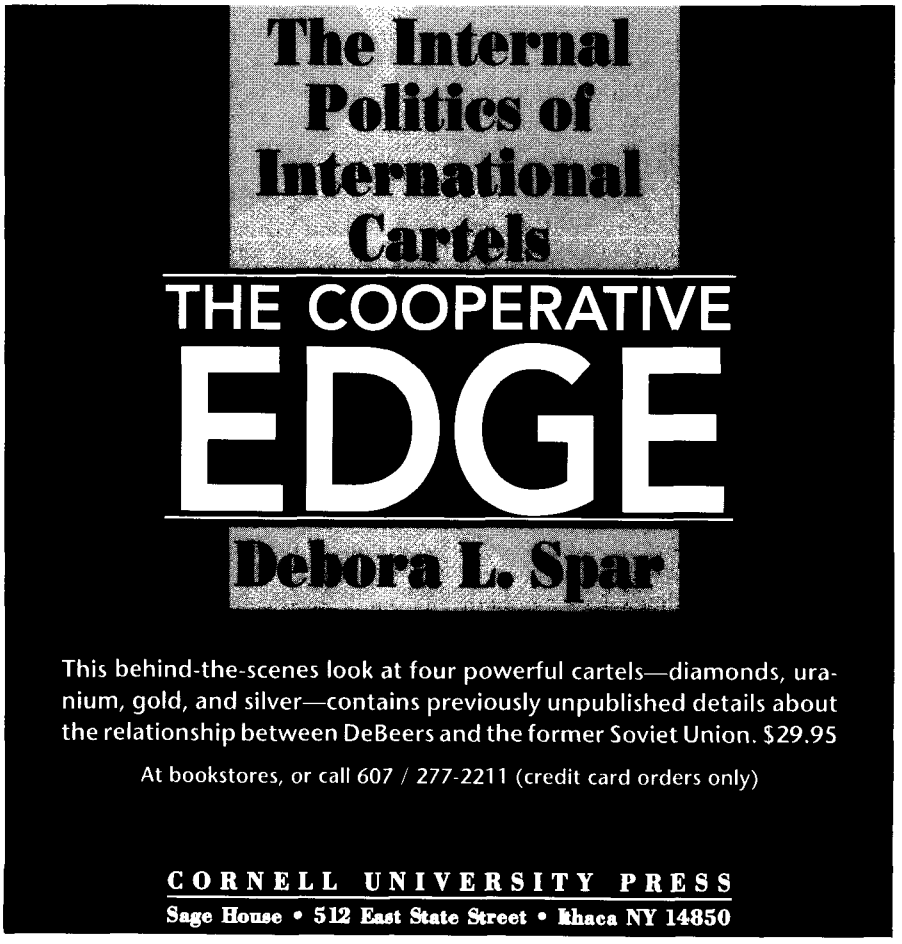
In England the artistic zeitgeist operated differently. The nobility and the gentry, who were particularly affluent in the eighteenth century, had a concept of the country seat as almost a whole cosmos of mankind's achievements. For their own edification, and for their descendants, the English gentlemen of the time went far beyond the continental concept of the "cabinet of curiosities" or *wunderkammer*, and filled their family seats with libraries, picture galleries and sculpture halls full of ancient and modern treasures. It is estimated that at its height the "Grand Tour" of Europe saw 30,000 affluent young Englishmen combing Italy, France and Germany for artworks to be shipped to their estates in the English countryside. It was the greatest transfer of artistic wealth in history. Every year now sees surprising results of that phenomenon; in 1992, for instance, a previously unknown painting by Titian, a major work, emerged into the saleroom from the servants' hall of a grand country house.

Collecting in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, in Europe and in America, kept pace with the rise of a newly rich mercantile class, which added the motive of social prestige and public philanthropy to the pursuit of great art. The Rothschilds, Bishofsheims, Cassells, Fricks, Wideners and Huntingtons are but a few of the names that figure prominently in a kind of Golden Age of collecting between the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War. In our own recent past Paul Mellon, Norton Simon, Peter Ludwig, Walter Annenberg, Count Seilern and David Rockefeller belong on the roster. Remember, too, Gulbenkian, Courtauld, the Cone sisters in Baltimore, Andrew Mellon and Samuel Kress, all of whom collected mostly between the two world wars.

Don't look to Muensterberger for any excursion into their cultural accomplishments and significance. He begins in the nursery, with speculations such as this: "Is this an echo of the baby's subtle response to not-good-enough care in providing him with both physical and emotional nutriment?" And he never aims to get much beyond it:

> Later I shall deal with some striking routes collectors may take to satisfy their aims, or more strictly speaking, to give way to the relentless and intrinsically narcissistic aim to find tangible support in order to erase the archaic experience of anxiety and, possibly, to help undo traumata during the formative years.

It is fitting, perhaps, that Muensterberger's primitive approach culminates in a reduction of all collectors to the status of scavengers of the skulls and bones of saints, in search of "mana" or special power. Thus the collecting of art and holy relics are joined together as symptoms of "delusional conviction and possessiveness." The serious book on collecting, which must encompass not only subtle biography and informed cultural history but also a consideration of art markets, remains to be written. •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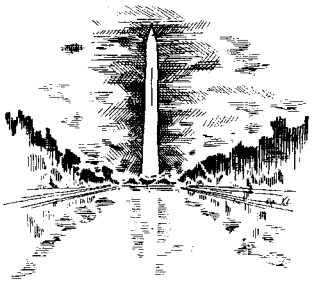
WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Theatre

WHEN I WAS A KID, I ALWAYS WANTed to be an actor. In England it was a respectable condition, and to a homosexual tot, it seemed one of the few professions—along with the Church, the academy and politics—where unmarried eccentrics could eventually find a home. My parents, perhaps intuiting my dilemma, sent me to what were politely called "elocution lessons" to improve my insufficiently refined accent; and this being the 1970s, we were not simply taught to finesse our vowels but to get in touch with our emotions. One of my first "lessons" at the age of nine required me to stand for ten minutes as if I were a block of ice melting in the sun; my second was to be a flower opening in a meadow. No doubt (along with many other members of my generation) this was the beginning of my drift to the right. But eventually, the combination of post-'60s self-expression and pre-'60s self-improvement paid off: I learned to recite a great deal of English poetry by heart; and by the time I reached my teens I had an ability to mimic most British game-show hosts and a highly developed empathy for flora. But the acting bug really came into its own in adolescence. Dismayed at the thought of dating girls, I found refuge in evening improv sessions and play rehearsals, and wound up developing tenacious bonds with a whole slew of equally troubled and overstimulated teens. Soon, I was auditioning for Britain's National Youth Theatre, an amateur theater troupe recruited from high-school kids across the country. The kids were brought together in London for the summer and directed by professionals in the West End. After being turned down once, I got in, and spent three liberating summers on the dole in London, pretending to look for work, but actually indulging my weakness for acting out and watching other people get stoned.

I HAD A BLAST. THERE'S SOMEthing exhilarating about the instant camaraderie of a theater production (maybe Amitai Etzioni should give it a go); and the National Youth Theatre was run on strictly communitarian lines. Part of the point was social engineering: kids were dragged from every background in Britain and forced to spend every waking hour together. The show itself was regarded as almost an afterthought; apprenticeship in character-building and consciousness-raising rigors was the point. Direction largely took the form of the famed director Michael Croft's memorable injunction to me: "Get on stage; get your lines out as quickly as possible; and fuck off." This was for my memorable three-sentence performance as the army medical inspector in Peter Terson's soccer drama "Zigger-Zagger." My scene consisted of looking down someone's pants, asking them to cough and telling them they were unsuitable for service. For the rest of the show I played a somewhat unlikely member of a soccer mob. (The apex of my Youth Theatre career was the more dignified part of the Third Priest in T.S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral.") I will always be grateful to the Youth Theatre, not simply for what it taught me about people from Newcastle, but because it cured me of my desire to be an actor.



THE REASON WASN'T CONSTANT public humiliation. It was other actors. Now most people in Youth Theater were never going to be actors, anyway. They were supposed to act out their authentic working-class experience for middle-class audiences, have a great time and then go back home and be authentically working-class again. So they were in general a pretty bearable—and often convivial—bunch: with the usual amount of brains, common sense and self-awareness. But because this was still a dramatic enterprise, there were plenty of authentic actor types hanging about the set, and I got to spend days and months around them. Anyone who has had this kind of extended exposure to actors will privately admit after a little provocation what everybody knows in their hearts: in general, they are an excruciating bunch of insincere egomaniacs. They have little to say for themselves, they manage to combine fathomless vanity with equally fathomless insecurity, and their politics are uniformly idiotic. Several mind-killing, post-pubescent conversations came back to me this week watching the Oscars. My three favorite wince-makers: Tom Hanks's belabored and incoherent attempt to immortalize those dead from AIDS; Paul Newman's stunning statement that actors were the most giving of all Americans (social workers, teachers, parents, take a ticket); and Whoopi Goldberg's sudden declaration, after a clip from *In the Name of the Father,* that "we're amazing, aren't we?"

WELL, THEY ARE, IN A WAY. MORE amazing is our tolerance of them. In earlier cultures actors were regarded as morally suspect and generally amusing as long as they were kept in their place. Today, they're role models. The vast majority of interviews and features of celebrities in the media are about these characters, who, by any reckoning, are among the least intrinsically interesting people on the planet. I mean, who could possibly read another cover story on Tom Cruise? Or sit through another interview with Geena Davis? There are even signs that the tendency is getting worse. The same week President Clinton decided to go to the Oscars and then mercifully decided against it, *The New Yorker*'s special 212-page Hollywood issue invaded my mailbox. Two critical institutions of two of the biggest East Coast cities had simultaneously abandoned all pretense of condescension and wantonly prostrated themselves before the modern movie industry. The magazine ran a semi-nude picture of Liam Neeson (Schindler's chest?) and a two-page Avedon instamatic of Mike Ovitz, Michael Eisner and Barry Diller, accompanied by their riveting entries in *Who's Who.* And the rest of us sat goggle-eyed to a screen, watching actor after actor suck up to each other and their bosses and God knows who else. As I walked to a friend's house to watch the show, Washington was a ghost town.

MY OWN THREE-BEERS-LATER THEory about this is our culture's general flight from its center. Few of us, as Bill Clinton is rapidly finding out, believe politics is going to rescue our lives, let alone provide us with meaning; many of us see a shared life as something that occurs within families or workplaces and that doesn't amount to anything that can be generalized or articulated. The culture's descent into small, mutually opaque segments largely bars some kind of common expression of belief. And the churches have retreated into liberalism's carefully demarcated ghettos. So actors fill the common space. Like substitute teachers, they grope for the lessons others used to teach; but merely provide us with gestures. For a culture of narcissism, they're the perfect idols. They're what every kid, who doesn't know any better, really wants to be.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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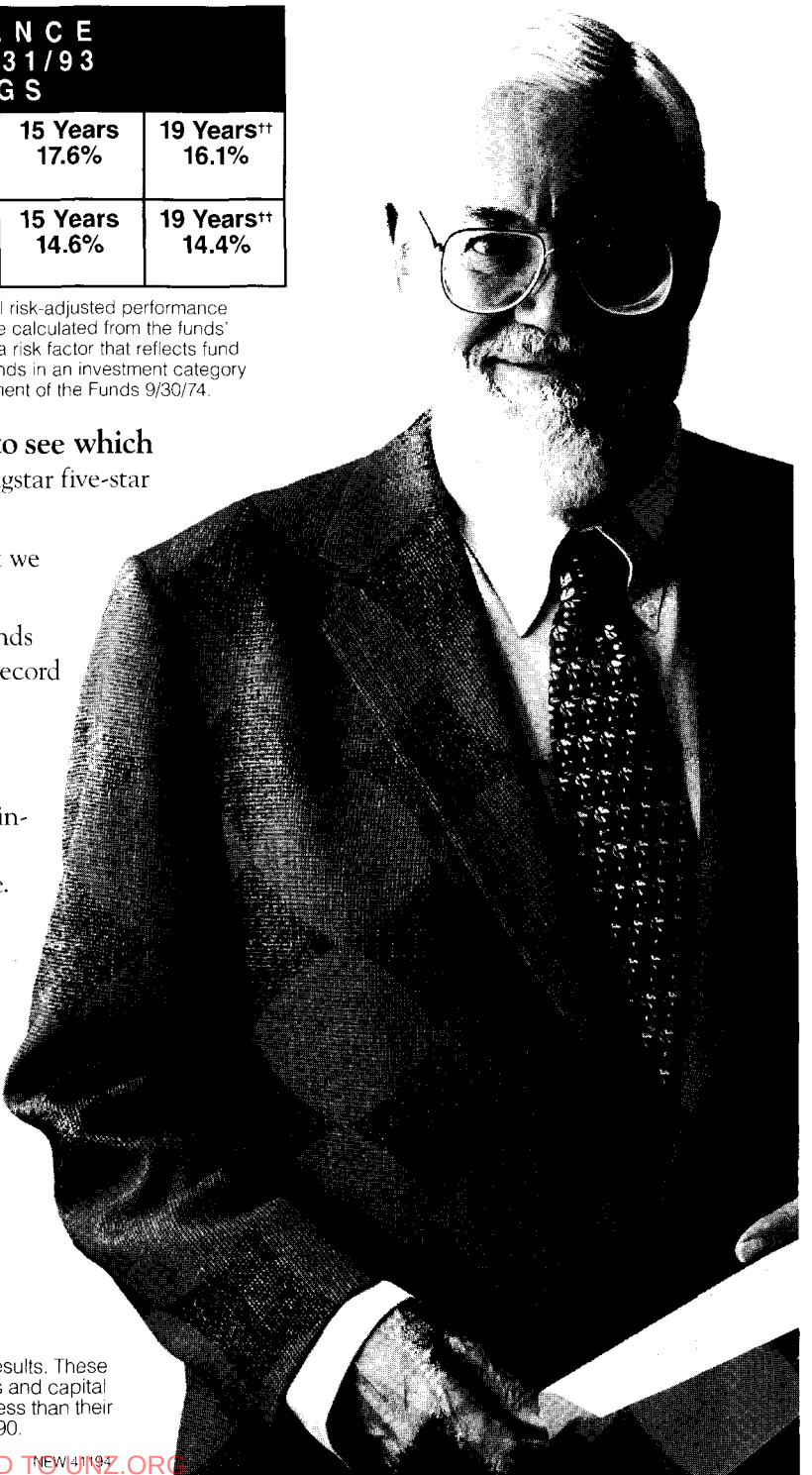

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